
Smart Partnerships: Working Effectively and Collaboratively with Community Organizations

University Community Engagement
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PARTNERSHIPS AS TEAMS

Partnerships can be thought of as a type of team. It is important that members of a partnership reach consensus on the type of team it is, the team components they embrace, and what characteristics distinguish mediocre from effective teams. This exercise is intended to move participants toward common understandings.

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF A TEAM?

WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF A TEAM?

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WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN **EFFECTIVE** TEAM?

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THE FIVE DISCIPLINES: THE PRACTICES OF PEOPLE IN LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

PERSONAL MASTERY

The dual skills of continually clarifying (a) what is important to us and (b) learning to see current reality more clearly.

MENTAL MODELS

The ability to uncover our deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.

BUILDING SHARED VISION

The practice of creating shared “pictures of the future” that foster genuine commitment.

TEAM LEARNING

The capacity to “think together,” which is gained by mastering the skills of dialogue as opposed to discussion, and learning to recognize patterns of interaction that undermine learning.

SYSTEMS THINKING

The discipline for seeing “wholes”, for understanding dynamic complexity, and for seeing patterns of change rather than static “snapshots.”

(From Peter Senge, “The Fifth Discipline: The Arts and Practice of the Learning Organization”, 1990)

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVENESS

SELF UNDERSTANDING

- Be aware of your own culture
- Surface your mental models

UNDERSTAND OTHERS

- Practice empathy
- Learn from interactions
- Avoid attributions
- Be non-judgmental
- Avoid stereotypes
- Be able to “Walk in another’s shoes”

HOLD CONVERSATIONS OF RESPECT

- Use effective communication skills
- Respect the other culture
- Develop and maintain relationships
- Listen with your head and your heart
- Be flexible
- Adjust according to other’s reactions

GENERAL SKILLS FOR CONTINUED LEARNING

- Learn to tolerate ambiguity
- Cultivate translators, mediators, and models
- Be persistent

SIX KEYS TO SUCCESS

A Common Sense Path to Personal Growth

1. Get to know yourself and build ways for self improvement.
2. Design or seek out situations and environments that help you learn.
3. Make conscious effort to learn something every day and keep track of it.
4. Set goals; then find the resources. Never let lack of resources stop you.
5. When people or places don't support your growth, cut them loose.
6. Continually challenge yourself. Grades, degrees, and credentials are only indicators or markers.

THE NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONS

UNDERSTANDING THEORY CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATIONS

CLASSICAL Theory of Organizations

- Places an emphasis on the structure of organizations
- Attention is on organizational efficiency in goal achievement
- The human element is largely ignored

HUMAN RELATIONS Theory of Organizations

- Gives attention to the relationships between organizational members and the effect of social norms on worker behavior
- Embraces democratic leadership styles

SYSTEMS Theory of Organizations

- Gives attention to the interaction between organizations and their task environment
- It assumes that in open systems, organizations receive input from the environment, transforms it in some way, and outputs to the environment, which in turn provides feedback to the organization and starts the process over again.

Note: As a practical matter, few organizations adhere to one theory exclusively. They tend to move among the theories as the situation dictates.

ACTIVITY PLANNING

A SIX-STEP PROCESS TO SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVE GOALS

For each goal to be pursued, staff should ask and develop answers to the following questions.

1. **What are we already doing in this area? To whom is this service to be provided?** – This enables an assessment of whether the goal or service is already being adequately addressed and whether it is directed to the appropriate audiences/clients.
2. **What more do we need to do?** – If the answer to the preceding question is that the area is not being adequately addressed, it focuses attention on areas of weakness or omission. Otherwise it fosters a quick conclusion that no further effort is needed in this area.
3. **Who else needs to be involved and why?** – Some services and/or objectives cannot be met without the involvement of others (e.g.; technical expertise of computer personnel, transcripts from admissions and records office, authorization or approval of superiors, etc.). This step directs attention to identifying what external persons need to be involved in what aspect of program operations and prompts early solicitation of required support and approvals.
4. **What are the barriers to changing what we do?** – Requires conscious consideration of reasons the plan may not be able to be successfully implemented. Examples might include:
 - a. Dependence on others who do not share the partnership's objects or who work on a different time cycle
 - b. Staff reluctance to give up old habits
 - c. Staff fears about doing things differently or feelings of inadequacy
 - d. Inadequate resources (human and/or fiscal)
5. **What strategies can be implemented to overcome these barriers?** – Prompts planning staff to think about win-win strategies to obtain needed support of others, about training that might overcome staff apprehensions, and/or alterations in timelines to better integrate or align multiple tasks.
6. **How do we measure our effectiveness? How frequently do we review these measures?** – Prompts planning staff to define tasks and activities in concrete ways that can be measured. When combined with data on the contributions of others, it permits qualitative judgments about levels of success attributable to staff efforts and success attributable to the support of others.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

ATTITUDE

“Nothing can stop the person with the right mental attitude from achieving their goals; nothing on earth can help the person with the wrong mental attitude.”

Thomas Jefferson

DECISIONS

Decisions ...select one future state of affairs in preference to another and directs behavior toward the chosen alternative.

Herbert A. Simon, 1976

QUALITY

“Quality is never an accident; it always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”

Willa A. Foster

MISCELLANEOUS

- Nothing is as easy as it looks.
- Everything takes longer than you think.
- If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.
- It is impossible to make anything foolproof because fools are so ingenious.

Selected Basic Principles of Murphy's Law