



Partnership, activate!

A playbook on how to join forces with other business owners, nonprofits and sponsors—for impact, for influence, for profit, and to change the world.

Week One Topic Overview

Great partners do tremendous things for your life and business.

They can also be sources of tremendous anxiety, strife and conflict, if not established clearly and openly.

Choosing a partner who doesn't have your interests at heart or who is out of sync with what you're trying to build, may cause you to live with a bad relationship for several months or even years. You want to be selective. They should be adding value to what you're doing, AND you should be adding value to what they are doing.

This week's class is about learning how to create criteria for making the very tough decision about whom to entrust with your business name and reputation. It is also about how to talk about what you both need to do to make the relationship mutually beneficial and spot red flags quickly, and provide a graceful exit, if things don't go as intended.

Why Partner?

Charlie Gilkey has a wonderful framework for understanding how to make strategic choices about your business.

It is called Cash Flow, Visibility and Opportunity.

This is an ideal way to think about partnerships.

1. Do you want to partner with someone to make more money?
2. Do you want to partner with someone to build your audience and gain exposure?
3. Do you want to partner with someone to set up an “opportunity chain” to position your business for growth in the future?

A partnership homerun would include all three of these elements.

You can see the details about Cash Flow, Visibility and Opportunity here: [3 Goals of Any Business Activity](#)

Partnership Definitions

Partnerships have widely varying results and can present partners with special challenges.

Business partnership

A partnership is formed between one or more businesses in which **partners** (owners) co-labor to achieve and share profits or losses. Non-profit organizations may partner together to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission.

Example:

- ★ Microsoft and NBC for MSNBC

Affiliate Partnership

Affiliate marketing partnership is a marketing practice in which a business rewards one or more affiliates for each visitor or customer brought about by the affiliate's own marketing.

Example:

- ★ Pam is an affiliate partner for Charlie's new product *Living the Good Life*.

Joint Venture

A joint venture is a business agreements in which parties agree to develop, for a finite time, a new entity and new assets by contributing equity. They exercise control over the enterprise and consequently share revenues, expenses and assets.

Examples:

- ★ Pam and Charlie created the *Lift Off Retreat*, an intensive business design program for entrepreneurs.
- ★ Pam and Michele created two programs for coaches: *KickAss Mentoring Marketing* and *Career Invention Certification*.

Sponsorships

Sponsorship is a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property. A particular form of specialized brand sponsorship where a brand sponsors an unusual event or pastime that then becomes synonymous with that brand (to the point where future brands may be excluded from participation) is known as 'about sponsorship'. This provides a strong walled-garden sponsorship relationship between particular events and the brand. Another benefit is the ability to reach a specific demographic or target market.

Examples:

- ★ Desiree supported sponsorship deals with State Farm and NCAA & Habitat for Humanity Youth Programs.
- ★ GE sponsored the release of a new book from The Domino Project, so that readers could get the ebook for free.

Your goals

- ★ What are your values?
- ★ What are your business goals for the next 3 months - 6 months and 1 year?
- ★ Where do you fit with your market?
- ★ Who are your customers? What do they need?
- ★ What is your current reach/impact?
- ★ What do you want it to be?

Definition of your ideal partner

- ★ What do you hope to gain from the partnership?
- ★ What skills do they bring?
- ★ What strengths do they bring?
- ★ What resources do they bring?
- ★ Which values do they share?

Questions to discuss with a potential partner

Why the partnership?

- ★ What excites you about this potential partnership?
- ★ What do you know about me and the experience I bring?
- ★ Have you done a partnership like this in the past? If, so how did it go?
- ★ What partnerships are you currently involved in?
- ★ Tell me about a partnership you were involved in that was not successful? What lessons did you learn?
- ★ What are your strengths? Weaknesses?

Strategic fit

- ★ How does this project/program/venture fit with your body of work?
- ★ Who are our competitors? What makes our new product/service any different or more needed by customers?
- ★ What are the major goals for your organization/business over the next three years? Does this partnership fit in with those goals?
- ★ How much time will this partnership require?
- ★ How much money will this partnership require?

Our markets/sales style

- ★ What have you found is the best way for you to market and sell to your community?
- ★ Beyond dollars how will we define success?

Our working relationship

- ★ How do you like to communicate? How will we share information during the partnership?
- ★ How do you like to get feedback?
- ★ What will you not tolerate?
- ★ What are your non-negotiables in this partnership?

Effective Communication Guidelines

Some conversations are just hard. It can especially difficult to have an open and honest conversation with people you admire, work with and just plain like! Like other skills the more you practice the better you become.

So here are some tips.

Create An Effective Atmosphere

The purpose of this is to get started on the right foot so that the parties are ready to address the conflict/issue and feel relatively at ease and safe. Safety is very important, both physically and psychologically.

- ★ Find a neutral space and the right time
- ★ Initiate the conversation
- ★ Use non-judgmental, neutral language to make opening comments about the conflict/issue
- ★ Set ground rules (listen to each other's perspective)
- ★ Explain the process
- ★ Create a power balance where possible

What's Important

- ★ Be calm and matter of fact
- ★ Be fair and impartial
- ★ Be positive--we can work this out
- ★ Be collaborative
- ★ Frame issues in a way that creates opportunities
- ★ Know and feel it is ok to disagree
- ★ Don't be wordy

Dangers

- ★ Describing the "problem" negatively
- ★ Being one-sided (even if you are involved)
- ★ A power imbalance not compensated for
- ★ Lack of direction
- ★ Lack of ground rules (enforced)
- ★ Unbridled anger

Problem Determination

This step is done twice or more if there are more than 2 participants. The purpose of this step is to obtain everyone's view of the situation and to gather facts. It is also so that everyone hears each other's perspectives.

- ★ People describe their own perception of the problem without interruption. Others listen.
- ★ Use active listening
- ★ Neutralize emotional content.
- ★ Ask questions to elicit detail
- ★ Clarify vague statements
- ★ Maintain a calm atmosphere
- ★ Look for underlying problems

Useful Questions to Gather Information

- ★ *Could you say more about that?*
- ★ *Could you give me a specific example?*
- ★ *What do you mean by...?*

Useful Questions to Uncover Needs and Interests

- ★ *What is it about that is important to you?*
- ★ *What would having that do for you?*
- ★ *Could you tell me more about how you came to feel this way?*

What's Important

- ★ The parties don't have to agree on the facts. Help parties to understand that they can come up with a solution without agreeing on details.
- ★ Allow full telling of the story
- ★ Don't make quick judgments

Dangers in this Step

- ★ Constant rebuttals
- ★ Rambling
- ★ Excessive emotion (acknowledge and redirect)

Issue Identification

This is your opportunity to focus on both the individual and the shared needs, to build positive shared power, and to help participants look to the future and learn from the past. Both parties have selected specific issues to focus on. Find the common issues that are causing the conflict, distinguish between "presenting" and underlying problems, state issues in resolvable language.

Useful Ways to Frame the Issue

- ★ Use to shift into a collaborative problem-solving mode.
- ★ *How can we (state one party's needs), while at the same time (state the other party's needs)?*
- ★ *How can we work together to achieve...?*
- ★ *So we are figuring out what to do about.... Is that what you see as the issue?*

What's Important

- ★ Focus on the cause of the dispute
- ★ Be aware of hidden agenda or missed perceptions
- ★ Get agreement that these are the issues

Dangers in this Step

- ★ Failing to isolate the facts that are relevant
- ★ Confusing facts with issues
- ★ Improper determination of issues.

Conclusion

It is important to provide closure whether parties do or do not reach a settlement.

If the parties reach agreement:

- ★ Restate
- ★ Maybe a written agreement is needed
- ★ Who, what, when and where?
- ★ Should there be check-backs?
- ★ What happens if the agreement is broken?

Dangers in this Step

- ★ Too quick to conclude there is no solution
- ★ Failing to follow up if necessary
- ★ Failure to reinforce positives in process or reinforces the hostility which still exists
- ★ Too invested in reaching resolution--feels discouraged

Homework for Class One

1. Decide the kind of partnership that you want to pursue in the short (quarter) or mid-term (this year).
2. Using the content from tonight's class and your own thoughts, define:
 - 3 critical things you hope to gain from this partnership
 - Your key personal values that must be respected in this partnership
 - Your non-negotiables in the partnership
 - The specific strengths, skills and resources you are looking for in a partner
3. Identify a list of potential partners for this project

Class Materials

See class materials page for class recordings and supplementary materials.

<http://www.escapefromcubiclenation.com/partnershipmaterials/>

Questions?

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