

Rock Solid

The Power of Partnership

BLOG

June 2013 – There's something to be said about the power of PARTNERSHIP.

I am currently coaching some people who are vetting the prospects of teaming up with new partners within their respective leadership circles. The intentionality is high, because the stakes are high. Get it right and life is good. Get it wrong and you're looking for the red flashing button marked: get-me-out-of-here-in-a-hurry. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

So as a leader, when the top priority on your shopping list is **FIND A NEW PARTNER**, what do you look for?

Having spent the better part of 30 years in strategic partnerships, like collecting rare coins, I have collected some priceless learnings—sometimes the hard way. Let me trot out a handful.

Nothing is as fulfilling as a relationship of trust.

—Stephen M.R. Covery

- **Trust—Am I confident that my partner will always have my back?**

A partner is someone you can count on. To be sure, a true partner is someone who delivers on his promises, but more importantly, someone who always seeks your best interests. You live in the certainty that any issues or conflicts will be forthrightly addressed—always behind closed doors, never in the public square.

- **Respect—Do I have a deep personal regard for my partner?**

True partners have an uncompromising (and untouchable) respect for each other. While acknowledging their differences, they know, accept, and support the entire package of who the other person is. They defend your right to be you.

- **Clarity—Is there thoughtful delineation in our respective roles?**

Partnerships are set up for success when there has been a healthy dose of upfront agreement on respective responsibilities. Each person knows what lanes they are to run in. This kind of clarity rises in importance if there is considerable overlap of competencies between the partners.

- **Communication—Can I talk openly and freely with my partner?**

You can spot a great partnership by the quality of communication. Above all, there's a premium placed on clarity. But it's also open. Candid. Honest. Confidential. Comprehensive. Frequent. It's heart to heart. There are no surprises. And any potentially confusing communication is always interpreted with the benefit of the doubt.

- **Relationship—Is there an ever-growing relationship?**

Partners realize that everyday synergy and endgame productivity flow best out of relationship versus an org chart. They are constantly making relational deposit in their partnership account. More often than not, decisions and directions emerge effortlessly due to the deep well of relational capital.

- **Chemistry—Do I enjoy my partner?**

A partner is someone you simply like to be with. You feel at home. Relaxed. You bring out the best in each other. You track. You get each other. The partnership doesn't feel like a duty or obligation. There's energy. There's enjoyment.

In view of these partnership components, let me post a couple thoughts about how to put them into play.

If you're exploring a partnership, I would recommend that you and your potential partner carve out a chunk of time and thoughtfully discuss each of these essential ingredients. And be sure to mix it up a bit—take a hike, play some golf.

If you're currently in the middle of a partnership, I would recommend that first of all you call out which of these six components you do well and celebrate. And second, with a view to investing in your partnership, I'd recommend identifying which one you need to give attention to and devise a short set of strategies to elevate your game.

In short, the power of your partnerships will be in direct proportion to your investment in them. So invest well, because the ROI is high.

What do you value most in your partnerships?

Jump into the conversation. Post your comments below.