

Partnership Building: What Makes it Work? **Mike Winer, 4Results Together**

Mike Winer of 4Results Together presented on Partnership Building and what makes it work.

Winer began by explaining to the group what partnership is not:

1. Partnership is not about equality. Partners don't necessarily need to share everything equally. Partnership is unequal – some people show up a lot of the time, other people do not. A good leader will need to manage the different levels of interest and participation.
2. Partnership is not doing your own thing...but often some people are interested in what they can get out of it and not contributing to the whole. A good leader will take advantage of self-interest and use it to further the group's goals.

Partnership is difficult, but ADRCs cannot be truly successful without partnership. Winer told the group to be patient. In his experience, it takes 18 months to 2 years before partnerships really work well together. Some special communities can make it happen sooner (e.g., a few strong leaders, already established good working relationships). He told the ADRC staff to take the time needed to invest in partners.

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| Winer's Six Tools for Partnership Building |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reveal Resources2. Select level of involvement3. Integrate strategies4. Incorporate self-interests5. Commence actions6. Align responsibilities |
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(Note: The last handout in the ADRC binder indicates eight tools, but only six were presented during the ADRC conference.)

1. Reveal Resources

Most people focus on what they want to achieve rather than what is good for the whole. However, Winer says, people will act in their own self interest and that might be good for the group if the energy can be harnessed. A good leader will encourage people to reveal their unseen resources.

Items to consider:

1. *Customs* – will you meet in the morning or afternoon? During business hours or not?
2. *Languages* – even after all the years of being in this line of work, the acronyms are overwhelming... that's even if you assume English. Pay attention to jargon, especially if you are working with consumers or people with different backgrounds.
3. *Preferences* – People have different preferences and strengths. The four types of people are: Begetting, Becoming, Being, Bequeathing

- Begetting: These individuals love new beginnings, new ideas, brainstorming meetings.
- Becoming: These individuals want to figure out how are to put the pieces together, get organized, who's taking notes/ logistics?
- Being: These individuals like written agendas, raise budget questions
- Bequeathing: These individuals are the storytellers, they'll encourage people to give money or volunteer for something new.

The point is that you need all of these players for a partnership to work and some people will be uncomfortable with other parts of the process.

There are also personality-type issues that will arise that have nothing to do with the substance of the work. You need to be able to give people the opportunity to "work their type" at the time when you need them. A good leader can also phase some individuals out at some times, and back in at other times.

Partners will have a variety of capabilities:

- Authority (some people have)
- Connections (they can open doors)
- Expertise
- Facilitation
- Personality and Charisma
- Reputation in the community
- Resources (dollars, staff time)
- Rewards (esp. public acknowledgement)
- Others - Confrontation

A leader's charge is to tap the expertise in each person to make the partnership work.

Winer reminded the crown to celebrate - each person, all steps, every success, all the time!

2. Selected Involvement

There are different levels of intensity of involvement and you need to respect people for the level they want to work. Different levels of involvement are:

- a) cooperation (share ideas, but not really participate)
- b) coordination (join the group for a particular initiative)
- c) collaboration (being a real partner)

3. Integrated strategies

Winer stressed that the ADRCs need to have formative evaluation. They should assess progress along the way and find the strength in the progress. First, identify desired results (this should be a team decision). Then write a broad statement about the desired end point, such as a mission statement. Keep the mission statement in front of everyone

all the time (e.g., every set of minutes, electronic signature, etc.), because people move in and out, miss meetings, or join the partnership later.

The mission statement should be about the desired outcome for the target population – not about process.

4. Incorporate self-interest

A good leader must help all partners identify their self interest in the group's goals and help individual partnerships as much as possible, because it's in your self interest. If they have joint interests, the group can work well together. However, a good leader will also honor everyone's agenda.

How effective is identifying hidden agendas?

Identifying hidden agendas can help establish permission for people to act in their own self interest.

What should we do if we've already burned some bridges in our partnership?

It depends on what damage was done... you can just try to use unspoken ways to honor their contribution. Or, if the confrontation keeps coming back, you might choose to work through conflict resolution.

Do you have suggestions on disclosing self-interest? What if someone has a self-interest that the group cannot honor?

You could start with a ground rule that you are not giving anyone money through this partnership process. The general rule is not to point to the individual, but make a general statement.

5. Commenced Actions

The overall point of the partnership is to get things done. But most of what you will be doing is convening meetings and task forces. You need to capture action items in your minutes. Meetings must be focused so that things get done in the meeting.

"Action Minutes" include:

- Attendance
- What decisions were made – not who talked and what was said. At the beginning they will be process decisions, but then they will be more substantive later
- Who's taking responsibility for moving certain pieces forward. (Can they just do it, or are they developing a plan that will be approved before moving forward? Define authority for making decisions without group approval.)
- Accountability – when will those people report in/ complete the activity.
- Progress
- Next Steps
- Purpose of next meeting

Action minutes make it easy to track our success. Also, there can be public reward or public guilt-tripping. "Isn't it interesting that the same six people are doing most of the work?"

Decision making. It is important to decide how the group will make decisions -

1. authoritative (most control by leader)
2. consultative
3. democratic
4. consensual
5. delegated (least centralized control)

You may want to report in the minutes how a decision was made.

6. Aligned Responsibilities

Trust is not about liking people or being liked and not getting one's own way. Trust is reliance that a person will do what he/she says will get done.

There should be healthy conflict in the group. "Conflict is working through a difference of opinion. Fighting is the avoidance of conflict."

Mike Winer included several resources in the conference binder to assist ADRCs with partnership building, including:

- Managing Conflict: Building in Positive Change
- Action Minutes Template
- Eight Tools for a Successful Organization or Partnership
- Managing Partner Investment: Obtaining Buy-In
- Decision-Making: Control and Responsibility