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The Exit Phase

by **Andrew Humphries and Linda McComie, SCCI Ltd**
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This is the last blog in our series about implementing and managing collaborative relationships. We have talked about the reasons to collaborate, the key role of the Relationship Manager, partner selection and working successfully together. We now conclude with the phase where the actors disappear into the sunset.

Every successful business relationship will eventually come to an end, this is a natural progression. For example, where the market for the product or service declines or ceases to exist or at an agreed time limit as in the case of a completed project or, change in regulatory or other external conditions. Alternatively, one side or the other can trigger a breakup of the relationship. For example, culture mismatch could become serious enough to make an exit necessary as could a failure of effective enterprise relationship management or under performance. Break up would also occur where one or other of the partners ceases trading, is taken over or cannot fulfil its contractual obligations.

Just as in other aspects of relationship management the exit phase needs to be carefully planned from the beginning of the relationship and its execution managed, usually by the Relationship Managers (RMs).

Significant intellectual property rights will often be involved as well as those investments that have been made and used by the partners such as skills, materials and infrastructure. The impact on the up-stream and down-stream members of the supply chain should not be forgotten.

Much of this will have been recorded in the commercial section of the Enterprise Relationship Management Plan (ERMP) when the collaboration was first set up and will have been kept updated during the life of the relationship. It will also be useful to list in the ERMP the actions and resources that will be needed to achieve a tidy exit. Because of their knowledge and operational experience the RMs will have an important role to play in managing the exit process.

Here is a checklist of actions that should be used to manage the exit phase:

- RMs need to appoint teams with the requisite skills and experience
- Create exit project plan
- Agree how the Intellectual Property Rights and assets will be allocated
- Agree business continuity actions with supply chain members and stakeholders
- Ensure that all contractual terms are complied with or, if necessary variations are agreed
- Jointly review and record the lessons learned at the time of closing the ERMP. These need to be fed back into the respective organisations so that benefits can be realised in future projects.

A planned exit will ensure that a satisfactory outcome for all stakeholders will be achieved including the retention of goodwill and therefore the opportunity to do business in the future. A key benefit is learning from experience and improving relationship management capability.

Good relationship management has the capability to give you startling results. Do as little or as much as you need to do and the increase in business performance will repay your investment many times over.

About the Authors

Andrew Humphries and Linda McComie are acknowledged experts in the field of business relationship management. Their company, SCCI Ltd, specialises in transforming business relationships and alliances around the world into more effective and efficient revenue generating operations.

Implementing and Managing Collaborative Relationships – A Simple Guide

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