

Long-lasting, profitable, and innovative partnerships are the holy grail of the modern world. But how are they best achieved? Dr. Andrew Humphries, Chief Executive Officer of SCCI, an organization which helps organizations to improve business partnerships, and co-author of new book, *“Implementing and Managing Collaborative Relationships”* offers his insights



In partnership we trust

“Trust is nurtured by understanding and carefully managing interconnected business processes; based on each party’s willingness to demonstrate concern about everyone’s individual and joint success.”

Dr Andrew Humphries, CEO SCCI

Dr. Andrew Humphries

1. As somebody who has spent his career understanding business relationships and collaboration, how do you define “successful” partnerships?

Successful partnerships are those which manage to establish a “virtuous cycle”. That is, those which begin with specific aims based on the known capabilities of both sides and uncover further abilities as they continue. As a result, they realize more open and in-depth communication, stimulate creativity and innovation, and broaden the focus of each partner. When this is accomplished, intangible aspirations become achievable which, in turn, provides impetus for joint investment, enabling partners to take advantage of unexpected opportunities. The benefits encourage innovation, generating more value, which can then be reinvested.

In such relationships, trust is nurtured by understanding and carefully managing the interconnected business processes. And this is based on each party’s willingness to demonstrate concern about everyone’s individual and joint success.

Vital partnership characteristics and behaviors

- Long-term orientation – encourages stability, continuity, predictability, and long-term joint gains
- Interdependence/forbearance – compensates a loss of autonomy through expected gains
- Joint resourcing – C3 behavior (Collaborating, Co-operating, Co-ordinating) achieves effective operations
- Adaptivity – helps mold products, procedures, inventories, management, attitudes, values, and goals to the needs of the partnership
- Personal interaction – fosters trust and openness through personal relationships

2. Do you have any tips for good virtual collaborative engagement?

Whether the interaction is virtual or otherwise, the principles of collaborative working will always apply. A key component is investment in a relationship manager – appointed by each partner organization, with both strategic and operational oversight – to be responsible for relationship management of their organizations’ joint enterprises.

3. Reflecting on your years of research into effective partnerships, is there anything that is broadly underestimated?

Despite many case studies that conclusively prove the converse, doubt over whether collaboration is worth hard cash persists. However, collaboration drives traditional benefits, such as increased profits, greater market share and the fulfilment of project objectives. Further, it also improves intangible factors such as innovation, knowledge and skills capture, enhanced reputation, and brand value.

Another important point is that objective performance measurement is essential for the effective management of collaborative relationships, yet it is rarely applied to all parties simultaneously.

If done well it can:

- Provide an objective, non-partisan measure of relationship effectiveness and teamwork
- Highlight counter-productive activities and describe actions to turn them round
- Highlight positive activities and describe actions to enhance and spread good practice
- Create a common foundation for change
- Promote innovation and continuous improvement
- Support proactive governance