



TRUE NORTH

CHARTING YOUR JOURNEY TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Listening, Learning, and Understanding current state, client needs, and aspirations for the future is the foundation to building a strategic management approach to retention, partnership, and growth.





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To take the principles of TRUE NORTH and facilitate turning the theory into practice, we have created a series of exercises for you to complete on your journey to strategic partnerships, instilling culture, driving behaviors, and building an approach that will result in better retention and better business.

WORKBOOK

- E.1** EXERCISE 1: PERFORMANCE VS. TRUST
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- E.24** EXERCISE 24: COMPLETE YOUR PARTNERSHIP PLAN



FORWARD!

During my career I have come across many methodologies on how to drive strategic partnership but over the years it has struck me that many lack the practicality of the real world and drive administrative process rather than meaningful behaviors focused on the goal – creating mutually trusting relationships that deliver benefit to all parties and ultimately create the right conditions in which to retain, build and grow.

I wanted to create TRUE NORTH as a play book for individuals and organizations to embrace, to become part of their daily approach to business, and avoid lengthy and low value effort in exchange for creating a set of behaviors, a mindset, a way of doing business, and an engrained culture of success.

TRUE NORTH is set out in such a way that it talks about the Why, the What, the Who, and the practical measures you can take including exercises you can use, that when applied can really make a sustainable difference to your business. The 5-Light Risk & Situational Analysis is to an extent a series of subjective lenses based on facts and observations, but nevertheless encourages a logical self-reflection into the state of your relationships and is fundamental to understanding where you really stand.

The opportunities are significant, and in many cases, game changing, but this endeavor however is not to be taken lightly. To really drive change and make a difference, then the principles of TRUE NORTH need to be adopted at the very highest levels of your organization with sponsorship from executive leadership, the right level of resources to support it, and the long-term commitment to advancement.

As in the title, and the many references to exploration, TRUE NORTH is a journey for those who are committed to change, and have the courage, the grit, determination, and the endurance to see it through. Just like conquering the highest mountains, the deepest oceans, the polar caps, or exploring new horizons and discovering new lands, it is this commitment that you will need to succeed.

Whether new into business, sales, growth, retention, or as a recap for people from the very top of your organization, TRUE NORTH is intended to be an *aide memoir* for those serious about long term growth. TRUE NORTH maps out the principles in what I hope you find an interesting, easy to read, and easy to apply set of methodologies and practical steps that when applied will really make a big difference for you and for your organization.

I trust that you enjoy the read and the first steps of exploration to your next horizon and the discovery of new lands in your business journey.

FORWARD in all your endeavors!

Simon J. Elliot
Managing Partner & Co-Founder
4xi Global Consulting & Solutions





TRUE NORTH: LEARNING PATH

You will find that in each of the chapters we have talked about the principles and methodology and at the back of the playbook we have provided some exercises for you to complete that will help you and your teams turn the theory into reality which will include critical elements for your strategic partnership management plan, and strategic growth plan.

In addition to this self-help style approach, 4xi is available to coach you and your teams through this process including leadership and development training and programs.

EXAMPLES AND OBSERVATIONS

All the examples and observations in TRUE NORTH are theoretical and do not depict actual relationships past or present and are simply examples to tell the story of Strategic Partnership and to act as reference points on the journey, ultimately to success – for whatever that means in each different example and for each individual and organization.

CONTRIBUTORS

A big thank you to all of those who helped me compile this book, contributors, proofreaders, and editors, including:

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"Business is not a one-off, head-to-head match with a winner and a loser, that's not the way to look at it. Business is like playing a game of Lego, or a solving a jigsaw puzzle - it's about collaboratively creating, team solving, building together." – Simon Elliot



CHAPTER 1

WHY IS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IMPORTANT?



Chapter 1 of TRUE NORTH takes you through the partnership foundations of Trust, Integrity, Reliability, Loyalty, and Credibility. It talks through Performance vs. Trust and the hierarchy using real examples from the world of sport and business of how *“The Whole is greater than the Sum of the Parts”* taking you through the partnership lifecycle and how your journey to Strategic Partnership can transform not only your relationships but your business performance too.



In the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH, you will find several practical exercises to turn the theory and methodology into practical working documents to build your own Strategic Partnership playbook.





1.1 PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATIONS

There are all sorts of partnerships; from one's personal life, to friends and friendships, to relationships of marriage, and to employees, to employers, and in business.

The foundations are the same no matter which partnership we refer to. These are the basis on which we, over time, build mutual confidence, a sense of mutual reliance and reliability, conditions whereby each party understands the other.

Trust is the foundation and allows the parties to focus on the things that matter without the worry of hidden agendas or one upmanship on the other.



Figure 1.

Without trust, I would argue that there is no such thing as partnership, it is the single most important element to the foundational building blocks of partnership, but all five of these factors combined feed each other to provide the solid platform that exist in the most productive and beneficial relationships.

“trust”

[trəst]

A firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.

Synonyms: confidence, faith, belief, freedom from suspicion or doubt, sureness, certainty, assurance, credence, reliance.

TRUST:	the firm belief in the reliability, loyalty, integrity, or strength of a partner.
INTEGRITY:	the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
RELIABILITY:	the quality of being trustworthy or of performing consistently well.
LOYALTY:	the belief that a partner is loyal and a strong sense of allegiance.
CREDIBILITY:	the proof points and confidence to perform to the requirements.

The combination of Trust, Integrity, of Reliability, and Loyalty create a solid foundation, but Credibility is also a critical factor in determining your ability to do the job that is required. You might have all the foundations of trust but without the tangible evidence of capability, then the basis of trust alone will not suffice. The need for Credibility is of upmost importance, especially with highly complex or technical tasks

These foundations are fundamental to personal, business, as they are to teams.

It is these factors that will act as the glue to hold a team together, to create a mutual trusting environment where they will work together in support of each other, in the face of adversity, lose together, hopefully win more together, commiserate together, and celebrate together, through thick and thin.

"A team is not a group of people who work together. A team is a group of people that trust each other." - Simon Sinek

If trust is the foundation of partnership, then credibility gives you the wings to expand. Trust alone does not give you the kudos required for a client to award a contract or purchase. You also need to demonstrate a track record, and ideally with the client organization you are dealing with. Credibility and trust are intrinsically linked and coexist with each other in a delicate fashion. Credibility is about proving your trust, ability, and commitment over time. Similarly, both can take years to build and both can be lost in moments.

"credibility"

[. kredə' bilədē]

The quality of being trusted, convincing, and believed in.

Synonyms: trustworthiness, reliability, dependability, integrity, character, reputation, standing, status, kudos, eminence, plausible, believable, authority, validity.

"The process of building trust is an interesting one, but it begins with yourself, with what I call self-trust, and with your own credibility, your own trustworthiness. If you think about it, it's hard to establish trust with others if you can't trust yourself." - Stephen Covey

The cornerstone of credibility is your track record and proof points that you can deliver what is expected. Therefore case studies are so effective.

In the services world, this word is synonymous with the quality of your execution, your operations, your product, or service, otherwise known as *Bullet Proof Operations*.



BULLET PROOF OPERATIONS

The basis for growth in any situation is having Bullet Proof Operations, this is your singular biggest selling point – that you can deliver the promises made in your maybe fancy, well crafted, and professionally presented sales proposals and pitches. The credibility gained from being able to show actual work in progress and success is worth 100X promises and dreams from your growth team, no matter how good they are.



TRANSPARENCY IS KEY

The key to credibility and trust is believability. Throughout your relationships maintain transparency, be open, share successes but also share challenges too. As the old saying goes, “*a problem shared is a problem halved*” this also applies in business partnerships too. A true partner is likely to work through a particular challenge together, and when shoulder to shoulder, this also builds loyalty and a sense of mutual reliability in times of need.

1.2 PERFORMANCE VS. TRUST

No matter the type of partnerships, the assessment of Performance vs. Trust is a crucial consideration prior to entering into any kind of relationship.

The principle being that Performance is not and should not be the only measurement or criteria of selection. Trust out-weighs performance in maybe a less than obvious sense.

It's pretty obvious that a low performer with low trust levels is probably someone you don't want on your team. Same with a high performer with high levels of trust is a partner that would shoot to the head of the line but look how trust outweighs performance in this diagram helps to define where you might better seek Performance vs. Trust in your partnerships.

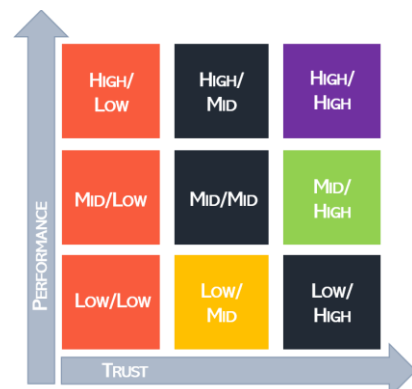


Figure 2.

The challenge is that there are many different measurements of performance but very few for trust although trust beats performance every time. In fact, those that choose performance over trust can often expect to inadvertently create more toxic environments with low trust/high performers generally focused on their own self-serving interests as opposed to the collective interests of their team or partners.

The three red boxes to the left show low levels of trust with differing levels of performance from low to high, and even the high performer in this column remains red for the reasons explained. The six boxes to the right are preferential in all cases, even the low performers, indicating the trust is more valuable than just performance. You are more likely want to engage with a partner that you trust than one that you don't, and even if you do, then partnerships based on trust last longer than those solely based on performance alone.

“Trust is what we do each day, when we get out of bed and put our clothes on. It is the thing that makes it possible for us to keep putting one foot in front of the other.” - Iyanla Vanzant

The issue is that trust is more fundamentally important than performance, with high performing teams choosing the latter over the former. Here is an example from my favorite sports team, Manchester United.



MANCHESTER UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

Under the reign of Sir. Alex Ferguson between 1986 and 2013, he became the most decorated manager in Football's history – during his 26 years with Manchester United he won 38 trophies, 13 Premier League titles, 5 FA Cups, and 2 UEFA Champions Leagues titles, but what has this got to do with Performance vs. Trust?

During this period, Ferguson believed in the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and trust was a fundamental element. Often, on face value, his team wasn't a collection of the greatest individual footballers but combined they were the greatest team. Throughout his reign there were many internationally recognized superstars but equally many of these came and went not necessarily because of their performance but for a lack of trust.

If you look at Ferguson's teams over this time, you can quickly spot that his teams were made up of predominantly players in the columns to the right in Figure 2., some were low, medium, and high in terms of performance, but they were all high on trust. The ins and outs of "superstars" quickly became toxic to the rest of the team and were short lived.

The challenge is that in business, there are many measurements to gauge the level of performance such as Key Performance Indicators but there are very few if any at all to measure trust. This is hocking really when you consider that trust is far more important in terms of long-term relationship, partnership, including long-term performance.

This is an equally important consideration when choosing your team, when building your Ideal Client Portfolio, and your client's decisions to choose you.

*"Nothing is as fast as the speed of trust.
Nothing is as fulfilling as a relationship of trust.
Nothing as inspiring as an offering of trust.
Nothing is as profitable as the economics of trust. Nothing has more influence than a reputation of trust." – Stephen Covey*

1.3 THE HIERARCHY OF TRUST

If the basis of trust is integrity, reliability, and loyalty, then what does that mean in terms of the hierarchy of building trust in relationships? It takes time even if all these ingredients exist because trust is earned and not given, it is the buildup of observations of these key tenets that ultimately result in trust.

Some relationships, for example, international relationships can take decades, some years, and in some extreme circumstances, like the battlefield, the field of sports, or on extreme expeditions, trust can be measured more quickly through deeds in the moment.

In business terms, as the level of trust increases, then so does the mutual value placed in your relationship, by both parties. Few aspire to be at the bottom of the trust pyramid (Fig. 3) with price often being the only differentiator. Many are on the transactional level with often little loyalty or longevity. Some are doing well and hold partnerships with clients, and few make it to the pinnacle of holding true strategic partnerships.

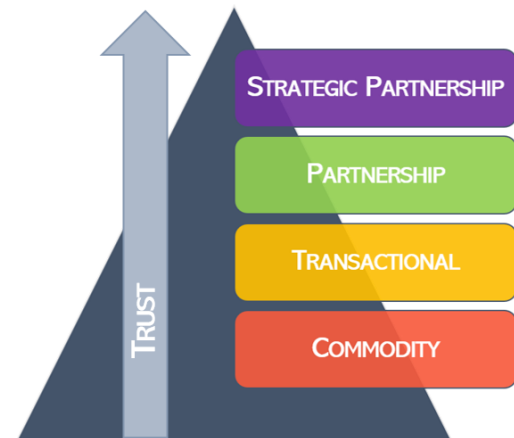


Figure 3.

The progression of trust is directly related to business success:



Figure 4.

"Trust is the foundation of any relationship, without it, there is no basis for partnership. It's akin to the foundations of a building, without trust, nothing sustainable exists." - Hans Lindh

1.4 LISTEN, LEARN, AND UNDERSTAND

Trust is built from the basis of mutual understanding. To truly build trust both parties must listen and learn from each other, not just hear the words, but interpret them, translate them to a level that you understand what they really mean. You cannot truly understand without caring and having empathy for your prospective and existing partners.

Like all the principles of partnership, they don't just apply to your business relationships but all of your relationships.

As an example, in Rugby, beyond the game itself, there is a deep cultural connection between the participants and supporters of the game, and much about understanding each other, no matter their origins.

The Scottish sing "O' Flower of Scotland" before a game, the Welsh, "Land of Our Fathers", the English, "Sweet Chariot", the Australians, "Waltzing Matilda" but most poignant of all is the New Zealand All Blacks with their traditional "Haka" before each game they play.

This cultural affinity plays a huge part in the teams and the players not only understanding each other but forms the basis of mutual Civility, Discipline, and of Respect – All key values of Rugby which although a very physical sport is deemed a game of gentlemen, and fundamental ingredients to any successful partnership.

Listening isn't just *"a thing"* either. It's a skill that takes effort not just to hear or read the words but to truly understand them. Be inquisitive, ask questions, put yourself in the other shoes (or boots) and embrace their perspectives from their standpoint, their history, culture, achievements, their dreams, and aspirations too.

That way, you will be better placed to align, plan, then engage in whatever your venture may be – on the field of Rugby, in a relationship, or in business.



Figure 5.

"People love to talk but hate to listen. Listening is not merely not talking, though even that is beyond most of our powers; it means taking a vigorous, human interest in what is being told to us. You can listen like a blank wall or like a splendid auditorium where every sound comes back fuller and richer." - Alice Duer Miller

1.5 THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE PARTS

Beyond the products or services, you provide, in addition to the value you already bring, how can the principle of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts apply to you? When thinking about high performing teams, then the concept is more obvious, maybe also in the world of business and acquisitions. These principles will start us thinking how we can leverage our collective in a variety of different circumstances.

The advantage being, that the resultant combination of any partnership can accelerate speed to market, steals market share, and maybe achieve dominance. Combined and complementary offerings reduce operating costs, drive revenues, and collective value because of the newly formed partnership. Here are some recent examples that exemplify this notion:



Amazon swallowing up high end grocery retailer Whole Foods creating a direct line to bricks and mortar retail, and a myriad of opportunities to fill the shelves with Amazon products, Amazon pick up locations, and a platform for live customer face to face interaction.



One of the biggest technology M&A deals ever, topping Facebook's \$22 Billion purchase of WhatsApp. Microsoft pick up over 433 Million social media users on the world's biggest professional social media network. Little overlap between the two, and all upside for both.



Disney's \$71.3 Billion purchase of the film and TV assets of 21st Century Fox, the company behind everything from the Alien movies to The Simpsons is one of the biggest media mergers ever, taking the number of the Big Hollywood 6 down to 5.



In 2015, the boards of Heinz and Kraft agreed to merge in a deal worth \$100 Billion. The newly formed Kraft Heinz Company became the 3rd largest food and beverage company in the United States, and the 5th largest in the world with some of the world's most iconic food brands falling under one roof.



In each of these examples you can see how the combination of two entities brings a multiplier effect has driving synergy, consolidation, complementary offerings. Here are some other examples of strategic alliances.



Ever since the World Wars, the United States and the United Kingdom continue to flourish as possibly the closest alliance of aligned interests of all nations, despite the War of Independence, these two nations share many beliefs and principles in what has often been termed as their special relationship.



By the sheer nature and complexity of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has formed several key strategic partnerships since its foundation in 1958. Most recently, those partnerships have taken a new course with strategic partnerships with the likes of SpaceX to provide reusable craft for their missions, potentially saving billions of dollars as a result.





Formed in 1949, 30 countries, a military alliance designed to avoid the lessons learned from the build up to and during WWII. Solidarity in the face of any potential future aggressor.

There are many different reasons to either acquire strategically or create strategic partnerships that ultimately bring value to the parties. In the base sense it could be around protection of the masses as the NATO example shows, about innovating around the norms in the NASA, SpaceX example. It could be about strength of alliances and allegiances between countries, market share, consolidation, complimentary offerings, new channels to market, or through layering services upon a core operating model, reducing cost and collective improved profitability. This applies not only to M&A but also in the partnerships you forge with clients and partners, going in with the mindset to understand how the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts.

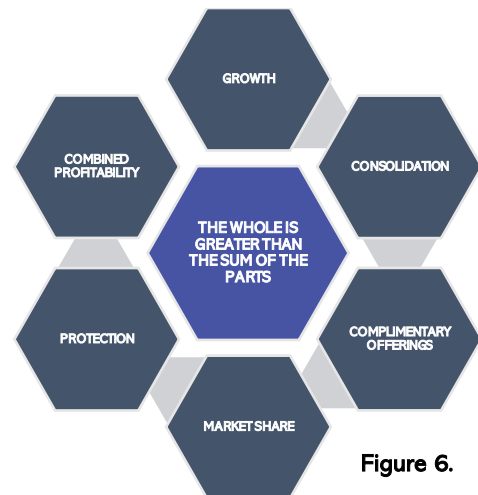


Figure 6.

So, thinking about your business, how can have your parts combine to equal more than the whole?

Here are some examples:



RECIPROCITY: Maybe one of the easiest and most simple opportunities. What does your partner do, produce, create that your organization can buy! From credit cards, to vehicles, from products to services.



COMPLEMENTARY: How can your existing products and services be applied or extended to solve strategic challenges for your clients such as adding concierge services to the work experience.



EASE OF USE: What about consolidation of services into one framework that enables greater visibility, consistency, and the opportunity to not only drive the ease of use but potentially save cost as a result?



ABOVE & BEYOND: What value can you drive beyond your products and services. How can you align to and deliver on initiatives that are important to your partner – sustainability, planet, community for example.

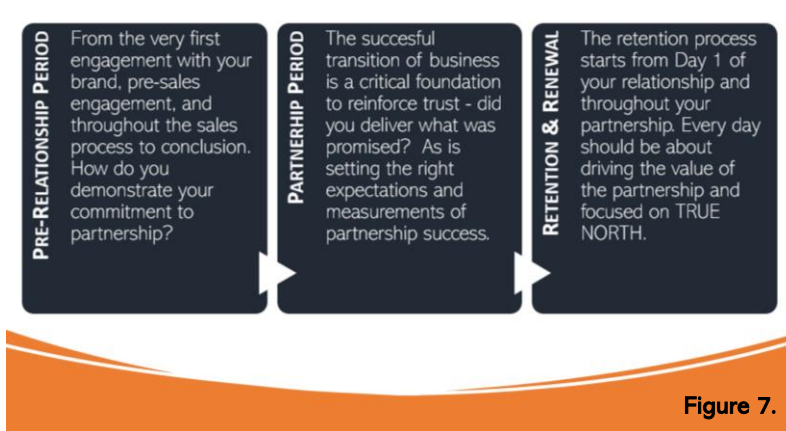


INSIGHTS: How can you deliver broader perspectives and intelligence that makes your client organization better at what they do, or how to tackle and solve problems, increase connectivity and opportunity?



1.6 THE PARTNERSHIP LIFECYCLE

Each industry is different in terms of average length of relationships and tenure. It can differ widely due to several factors including complexity, size, investment required, market saturation, competition, and many more factors, but the stages of Client Lifecycle remain:



The point is that the partnership process starts even prior to you engaging with a client and each and every day throughout the relationship. By focusing on TRUE NORTH, and reporting against that, measuring success based on that, and recalculating your position, you are more likely to reach your destination to success and true Strategic Partnership.

"Perception is strong and sight weak. In strategy it is important to see distant things as if they were close and to take a distanced view of close things." - Miyamoto Musashi, legendary Japanese swordsman

1.7 IT'S A JOURNEY

No matter where your business, or your partnerships are today, the path to Strategic Partnership is a journey. Today, you may be reactive, transaction focused and perhaps operating in silos. You may consider yourself more proactive, in relationships, and working in teams, but are you truly strategic, in mutually rewarding partnerships where you not only collaborate internally but with your clients too?



Figure 8.

Understanding the value of transformation from your current state is the first step of the journey, identifying the value to you, your organization, your people, and most importantly your partners is a step of self-realization of where you are today and where you aspire to be in the future.



ENTERPRISE COMMITMENT

The journey to Strategic Partnership is not a one-and-done but a long-term commitment on behalf of the entire enterprise. In fact, many have the opinion that the Strategic Partnership Initiative should be part of *"The Office of the Chief Executive"* to ensure that it has weight within the enterprise, credibility with clients, and the strength to be able to make a difference.

The journey isn't an easy one, it requires not only commitment but focus and endurance to stay the course and reap the rewards associated with strengthening partnerships, winning more business, increasing retention rates and accelerating vertical growth.

The rewards for adopting a Strategic Partnership approach vary from business to business and from industry to industry, but the outcomes can be substantive.

IMAGINE: taking your business and improving retention by just 1%, profitability by 1%, and revenue by the same 1% - what would that mean in absolute currency terms, and then what if you improved by 2%, 3%, 4% or more percent?



RE-CAP



USE-CASE

THE FOUNDATIONS

In the first chapter of TRUE NORTH, we have talked about the foundations of Strategic Partnership: of Trust, of Credibility and how Bullet Proof Operations are far more potent than sales pitches and Dog & Pony Shows.

We talked about Trust, Loyalty, Reliability, and Integrity and how, when combined with Credibility can amplify your retention and new business pursuit activities.

Performance versus Trust is a powerful concept that will really help you not only understand your partnership relationships but also your employee and people relationships too.

There are examples from Manchester United and how these principles played out spanning over a quarter of a century, and the most successful football (soccer) team of all time under the management and leadership of Sir. Alex Ferguson.

The importance of understanding the Hierarchy of Trust and moving upward from a Commoditized relationship through Transactional, and onward to Partnership, then Strategic Partnership and the benefits that brings to all parties, all based on the premise of Listening, Learning, and Understanding what your clients and partners really need, and want.

The concept of “*the Whole is Greater than the Sum of the Parts*” is an *integral element*, and reinforces the statement, “*Our Strength is in the Power of Our Collective*” – a call to a better way, together, of the better, and for the GOOD.

BUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

You find yourself in a highly commoditized industry and over the years your organization has been sucked in to answering blind RFP's from procurement departments that end up being focused on cost.

How do you differentiate?

How do you establish trust and credibility?

How can you move your organization up the value chain, and hierarchy to demonstrate your strategic value?

But also, how can you inspire your own organization to turn the tide and take the journey to Strategic Partnerships?

This first chapter of TRUE NORTH will give you the foundations to start that journey, built on Trust, Credibility and enable to identify and build your value to your clients and prospects and build a basis upon which you can deliver, measures, communicate, and reiterate value to your partners.



TRY THE TRUE NORTH EXERCISES



Go to the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH and follow these exercises. By the end of the work exercises you will have all the elements you need to build your own Strategic Partnership Playbook for your business portfolio.

- E.1** EXERCISE 1: PERFORMANCE VS. TRUST
- E.2** EXERCISE 2: THE HIERARCHY OF TRUST
- E.6** EXERCISE 6: SEARCHING THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE



CHAPTER 2

THE TRUE NORTH METHODOLOGY



Chapter 2 of TRUE NORTH starts with the power and importance of Self-Reflection and introduces the 5-Light Risk & Situational Assessment methodology for you to utilize as you assess the health of your current partnerships. It goes on to segmenting your current business portfolio into four categories: Growth, Leverage, Invest, and Watch to better manage outcomes. Understanding your Competition through analysis, what Data, Information and Insights you need, and how to gather Client Feedback to create a better level of visibility and understanding of your business.



In the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH, you will find several practical exercises to turn the theory and methodology into practical working documents to build your own Strategic Partnership playbook.

2.1 SELF-REFLECTION, THE ART, AND THE SCIENCE

Often is the case when you ask a business, “Which is your best client?” they will often respond either the biggest, or a combination with which brand they are most proud of, not always aligned to which is the most complementary or the best for the business.

There are many quantifiable business metrics to measure performance including revenue, profitability, cost of doing business, return on investment calculations etc. However, but there are also critical subjective measures driven by self-assessment and self-reflection. These are equally important as you mix the art and the science of assessment together to gain greater insights and understanding into the real state of your partnerships.

This level of self-reflection and awareness is critical in getting a real understanding of your business, but most importantly providing you with signposts to guide you on your journey to Strategic Partnership.



Figure 9.

Think about it as an artist who stands back from the canvass to take a more distant look at their work, to see it from a different perspective, to take the time to reflect with the benefit of distance to get away from the proximity of the canvass and see their art through another lens.

This level of self-reflection is an important way of understanding your place in the world, no matter who or where you are – it’s a fundamental practice and the basis of self-development.

“Great leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, self-reflection, education, training, and experience.” - Tony Buon



SELF REFLECTION

In all aspects of personal, professional, and indeed organizational development, self-reflection is fundamental. It is so important for people and organizations to take in data and feedback points from contemporaries, colleagues, connections, clients, and partners and to sift through what is important and what to take on board. Not all feedback necessitates change, as some of the quirks that may appear are you or your organizations personality – it’s good to have personality, so preserve those pieces but take note, take heed, and adjust the things that you need to, in order to attain even higher levels of success.

REMEMBER: There is no such thing as bad feedback!



2.2 5-LIGHT RISK AND SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

As you read through TRUE NORTH you will see various common references and tools, the 5-Light Risk and Situational Assessment will help you as you navigate through the assessments, and the exercises laid out in the TRUE NORTH Workbook.

“risk”

[risk]

A situation involving exposure to danger.

Synonyms: *possibility, chance, probability, likelihood, danger, peril, threat, menace, fear, prospect.*

This is a hybrid of a 5-Lights Situation Assessment used by some branches of the UK military to understand levels of risk and opportunity. Here is the definition of each:

5-LIGHT RISK ANALYSIS

The 5-Light Risk Analysis denotes the level of risk that you face in a circumstance, a situation, and in this case, a partnership. This is an indication of safety, or danger from being in the RED zone where the risk of loss is at its highest, and PURPLE where you are in a sweet spot and safest. Here are the definitions and examples:



RED: The highest level of risk of all the categories

Example: Client company is in financial distress. Client has served notice for areas of critical non-compliance; Circumstances represent danger of imminent termination.



AMBER: The second highest level of risk

Example: Client company has issued an RFP and is out to bid. Relationships are limited within client organization, and you have no direct relationship with decision makers.



BLACK: Neutral, Neither at risk, nor opportunity

Example: You are in an Even Keel situation. Neither At-Risk, nor in a favorable position either. This can be as dangerous a situation as RED and AMBER. It might be you don't know enough.



GREEN: Favorable level of, and state of opportunity

Example: The situation is safe. You take comfort in your relationships, your performance, and generally feel in a good position with the partnership.



PURPLE: Sweet spot. An optimum place to be

Example: You are in a premier position with the client and partnership. You have good connectivity to decision makers, good relationships, delivering on promises and great client references.



The key to risk assessment is the honesty of your self-reflection. All too often human nature can steer us to see the optimistic side of our partnerships, or with a myopic lens only see what we can see and not take other factors into consideration. A looming change in an industry, an upcoming IPO, change in leadership, lack of depth in relationships and connectivity can all lead to a sudden change in direction and therefore a sudden change in the levels of risk that you may face.



BIKINI ALERT STATE

The BIKINI Alert State was an indicator previously used by the UK Ministry of Defence to warn of non-specific forms of threat from civil disorder to war. Signs giving the current assessed alert state were displayed at the entrance of government buildings and military installations. Like the DEFCON alert states used in the United States, the BIKINI levels resulted in countermeasures being taken on either a National, local, or even building by building basis. The highest levels of RED and AMBER were only intended to be maintained for limited periods encouraging immediate actions to reduce the level of threat.

The word BIKINI was selected randomly by a computer.

So, if the RISK level is largely matters outside of your direct control and influence - factors that have built up or appeared due to the actions of others, then the Situational Assessment is an assessment of those things that are more the result of your own action, or in-action, and certainly things that we can influence, change, or control.

Think about the things that you can impact or change. What are the factors of the situation, the environment that you can effect change to improve the situation, and as a result, potentially reduce risk levels too?



“situation”

[.siCHə'wāSH(ə)n]

A set of circumstances in which one finds oneself, a state of affairs. The location and surroundings of a place.

Synonyms: *circumstances, state of affairs, condition, location, surroundings*

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

It might be that your situational analysis is based on your own level of satisfaction of the situation, your state of happiness, or even your pride as great indicators. Each one of these emotive drivers may reveal the clues of your assessment of each individual situation.

1 **LOW: Situation in need of significant improvement**

Example: It could be that the team on the ground needs strengthening. A lack of investment has resulted in a diminished level of service, or performance is below usual standards. You likely don't use this as a reference client. In fact, you may even omit it completely. Pride factor is low.

2 **MEDIOCRE: Situation improvement required**

Example: Financial performance is below expectations, quality scores are underperforming, high levels of labor turnover, and lack of consistency. Pride factor remains low.

3 **STEADY: Improve or stagnate, and with time will deteriorate**

Example: Performance is OK but nothing to write home about. Meets minimum levels of expectations, innovation, performance. A middle runner. There is little feeling of pride.

4 **GOOD: Stable. Positivity exists, some room for improvement**

Example: Maybe one of your better client partnerships. Meets expectations and in some instances exceeds them. Pride levels high, and probably aspiring to progress to the top tier.

5 **GREAT: Positive situation, likely to create positive outcomes**

Example: This will be a client, partnership, account that is firing on all cylinders. Exceeding financials, people, service, and innovation expectations. It is likely a flagship, reference partnerships where high levels of pride exist and feel-good factor in relation to the partnership.

Use these assessments to establish a point of view where you are in each circumstance and then to assess your overall portfolio, identify where actions need to be taken.

**BEWARE: HIGH RISK/HIGH SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

There may be examples where your profit levels are way above industry norm, and whilst that is high on the situation analysis, it also represents potentially a serious and fatal risk. If the client discovered that you are earning an extraordinary level of profit, trust will disintegrate, and the chances of retention would be greatly diminished.

**BE AWARE: LOW RISK/LOW SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

There may be examples where your own assessment is harsher than the level of risk. Your own expectations may be higher than those of your partner. One example could be cultural expectations where providing a 5-Star, western style food service operation in some parts of the world may not be the expectation and could potentially drive the opposite reaction to the intent.

"Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity is what we would have others think of us." - Unknown

2.3 THE 4-BOX PARTNERSHIP PORTFOLIO REVIEW

The risk and situational analysis is an important client by client, partnership by partnership assessment tool, and once complete, especially for larger portfolios, it might be useful to categorize groups of clients into categories that stimulate certain actions, next steps and approaches.

“strategic”

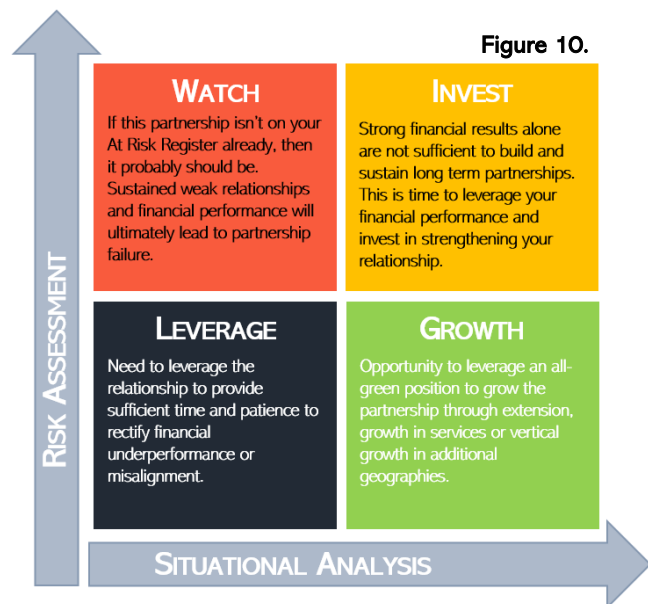
[strə'tējɪk]

Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.

Synonyms: *planned, calculated, deliberate, tactical, judicious, prudent, clever, shrewd, well thought out.*

Following the same principles of the 5-Light Risk Analysis, and the same color coding, it might be that as you assess both the Financial and Relationship assessment that helps you categorize these groups. As a suggestion, we have created the following categories:

- **GROWTH:** Positive Situation Analysis and Low Risk: Opportunity to leverage position through extension, growth in services or vertical growth.
- **LEVERAGE:** Low Risk Situational Analysis: Opportunity to leverage the relationship by buying time to improve performance.
- **INVEST:** Good Situational Analysis but Higher Risk points to a misalignment that needs to be addressed through the investment of time and resources
- **WATCH:** High Risk, Low Situational Analysis likely required more immediate remedial attention.



“With the level of uncertainty, we see today, more people are asking, how can you develop strategy in a world that keeps changing so fast? They are afraid that a set of rigid principles will hinder their ability to react quickly. I argue that it is precisely at such times that you need strategy” - Orit Gadish

2.4 KNOW YOUR COMPETITION

Understanding your competitions strengths and weaknesses in generally, or in a specific pursuit is crucial in assessing your own strengths and weaknesses that in turn will give you important signals to chart your course and tactics how to win in the market or an individual pursuit.

“competitor”



[kəm'pedədər]





An organization or country engaged in commercial or economic competition with others.

Synonyms: rival, challenger, opponent, adversary, combatant, competition, opposition.

Each industry is different, with its unique competitive context, but here is an example of measuring yourself in the face of the competition. Most importantly, be honest with yourselves. Maybe this is how Sir. Alex Ferguson might have analyzed his competition back in 1986.

Figure 11.

	Competition	Defence	Midfield	Attack	Team	Performance	Transfer Funds (\$)	Overall
	Manchester United	4	3	4	3	3	3	20
	Liverpool	4	5	5	4	5	4	27
	Everton	4	4	5	4	4	3	24
	West Ham	4	4	4	4	4	2	22
	Chelsea	2	3	3	3	3	3	17
	Arsenal	3	4	3	3	3	4	21

	Significant Weakness		Weakness		No Advantage		Advantage		Big Advantage
	Poorest Performance		Under Performance		Mid-table Performance		Consistent Performance		Highest Performance



As you can see, this analysis helps bring clarity on what to focus on, where to invest, where to make changes. It's this type of analysis that can really make a difference, and in the case above, becoming the best of the top 6 performing teams in English football at that time.



BE AWARE: KEEP IT REAL

It is so important that as you go through this exercise you keep it real. By inflating your own standing or strengths you will be doing yourself a disservice. Equally, balance this with having some swagger around your strengths too.

It's also very important to keep revisiting this exercise and keep it up to date. As you go through competitive processes you will use this as an important tool to understand your place in the competitive set.

Remember though, that the competitive assessment may, and probably should, vary for each different geography, sector, and each individual pursuit.

"A horse never runs so fast as when he has other horses to catch up and outpace." - Ovid



2.5 DATA, INFORMATION, AND INSIGHTS

Before we go too much further, the matter of data, information, and insights must be high up the priority list on your journey to Strategic Partnerships. It is the foundation of your decision making, it's the essence of your future state, understanding, what, how and why. But as importantly it is to obtain the information in the first place, how you gather it, store it, display it, access it, and share it is critically important, as making these discoveries are useless unless aggregated across your organization.

“data”

[ˈdɑːdə, ˈdādə]

Facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis. Things known or assumed as facts, making the basis of reasoning or calculation.

Synonyms: *facts, figures, statistics, details, particulars, specifics.*

So, what types of data do you need as a starting point? Well, firstly you need the business fundamentals around each of your clients and operations. These data points provide a solid fact based foundation and when combined will give you a fuller picture of your performance.

Each business is different and has different needs, there are numerous potential metrics to track, but here is an example of some of the important things to measure, even more powerful if you add year on year metrics so you can see the performance trends:

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ✱ Business Revenue | ✱ Pipeline Conversion Ratios | ✱ Client History Timeline |
| ✱ Profitability | ✱ Industry Penetration | ✱ Performance Reviews |
| ✱ New Business (A) | ✱ Sales by Product/Service | ✱ Client Satisfaction |
| ✱ Lost Business (B) | ✱ Geographic Growth | ✱ Consumer Satisfaction |
| ✱ Net New (A-B) | ✱ Resource Ratio | ✱ Employee Satisfaction |
| ✱ Retained Business | ✱ Funnel Analysis | ✱ Employee Turnover Rate |

“insight”

[ˈin,saɪt]

The capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing.

Synonyms: *intuition, perception, awareness, discernment, understanding, comprehension, appreciations, cognizance, acumen, astuteness.*

In addition to your internal data, where else do you get information or intelligence in your eco-system? This might be about client organizations, market conditions, things on the horizon, about competitors, movement in the markets or industry. Sources of intelligence might include:



- ✳ Company Reports
- ✳ Networks
- ✳ News Articles
- ✳ Business Journals
- ✳ Contacts
- ✳ News Alerts
- ✳ Industry Publications
- ✳ Your team
- ✳ LinkedIn

Identifying a way to gather these insights and interpret them is a good idea so that you can not only keep ahead of what's happening with clients, competitors, and markets but also an opportunity to stay abreast of the latest, to use insights to educate, and to shape your strategies far enough in advance of signaled changes. This is no different to the role of the Navigator reading the charts, the currents, and the weather to ensure that the ship takes the safest and swiftest route to the next port.

Your client Company Reports, and their website is a perfect place to start to get to understand your client, their strategy, performance, and even to learn their vernacular – an important part of being able to articulate your message translated into their language, not yours.

Making sure that you and your teams, as part of their routine, are regularly updating themselves through the various publications and information readily available in the public domain.

Ensuring that you leverage your team and aggregate intelligence into one central place – this could be one of the numerous internal sharing platforms available today.

Leverage the likes of LinkedIn, Google Alerts, and news search services to get a regular feed straight to your mailbox each morning.

Staying ahead, gathering these insights isn't just an administrative task but a fundamental behavior on the journey to building Strategic Partnership.

"Objectives can be compared to a compass bearing by which a ship navigates. A compass bearing is firm, but in actual navigation, a ship may veer off its course for many miles. Without a compass bearing, a ship would neither find its port nor be able to estimate the time required to get there." - Peter Drucker



2.6 CLIENT INSIGHTS

As the old saying goes, “Feedback is the breakfast of champions” and never a truer word was said. But how do you get meaningful, useful, and valuable feedback from your stakeholders? Understanding your stakeholders might be a good start to understand how to find it.

Clearly your customers and consumers are key stakeholders but don't forget your employees as another critical source of feedback. Think also about your partners, vendors, consultants, your networks, your industry, and pretty much all those people and organizations that you encounter.

“feedback”

[ˈfēd.bak]

Information about reactions to a product, a person's or business performance of a task which is used as a basis for improvement.

Synonyms: *response, answer, reply, rejoinder, riposte, retort, comeback, clapback.*

Then consider the different types of feedback mechanisms available to you, how you gather that information and consolidate it into consumable information that can help you understand how well or otherwise your organization is viewed.

Here are some different categories of feedback for you to consider:

EMPIRICAL FEEDBACK

This is the feedback based on verifiable observation or experience. This information can be drawn from internal data, and even more powerful when comparing to your competition. These are important sources to understand your market position and might include such measurements as:

- ✱ Client Resonance: Retention rate
- ✱ Market Attractiveness/Engagement: Inbound enquiries/website visitation
- ✱ Growth Effectiveness: Growth rate
- ✱ Employee Experience: Employee turnover
- ✱ Employment Brand: Applications per advertised vacancy

OPEN-SOURCE FEEDBACK

In the context of available data, open-source feedback is also a good source of aggregating information and insights as to how the world sees your business. There is plenty of data available on the world wide web that can help you understand your position too such as:

- ✱ Employee Experience Ranking: Great Place to Work, LinkedIn, Glassdoor etc.
- ✱ CEO Approval: Glassdoor provide this from employee and candidate feedback
- ✱ Verbatims: Key words (+/-) that people are referring to you and your business
- ✱ Industry Rankings: How does your industry perceive you?
- ✱ Confidence Ratings: Key words (+/-) around such imperatives such as confidence



SOLICITED FEEDBACK

In addition to mining information that already exists, there is also merit in engaging stakeholders in solicited feedback. It's much harder, and full of challenges such as:

- ✱ Getting balanced feedback from not just the discontent but the content too, the former tending to have louder voices and often more to say than the latter.
- ✱ Ensuring that the method of gathering feedback is easy and with as little intrusion as possible while minimizing as many routes to resistance.
- ✱ Avoid "Survey Fatigue" and multiple, long winded, self-serving surveys completely. Keep it short, to the point and focused on the stakeholder, and not you.

Think about the methods you already have in place today. Which are successful, which are not, the level of adoption that exists, then think about the many alternatives, which ones are right for you, and the balance of sufficiency without bombarding your stakeholders which might have the opposite effect to the one which you intend. Consider:

- ✱ Transaction Feedback: "How did we do?" at the point of transaction.
- ✱ Post Transaction Feedback: More in-depth, consider a reward to say thank you.
- ✱ Scheduled Feedback: At whatever frequency is right for you, consider ease and incentives.

"Without feedback, the organization starves. It operates in a vacuum, and cannot improve, adapt, or evolve." – Ken Blanchard



WHY IS PARTNERSHIP FEEDBACK IMPORTANT?

It's important because it serves as a guiding resource for the health and growth of your business. Don't you want to know if you're hitting the mark, or not as a business in the eyes of your partnerships? Don't you want to know how you can improve?

Within the good and the bad, you can find gems that make it easier to adjust and adapt the customer experience over time. In short, feedback is the way to keep your community at the heart of everything you do.

POTENTIAL FEEDBACK METHODS:

- ✱ Feedback surveys
- ✱ Partner contact forms
- ✱ Usability tests
- ✱ Partnership interviews
- ✱ Client Business Reviews
- ✱ Social media
- ✱ On-site activity
- ✱ Instant feedback

Of course, you need to identify what you want to measure, what is important to your client, partner, or consumer. The list is potentially long, but here are some examples, utilizing the same 5-Light Risk and Assessment model:

EXAMPLE CLIENT PARTNERSHIP SURVEY						
	To what extent do you believe that ABC understands your business?					
	How important is this to you?	1	2	3	4	5
	To what extent does ABC have the right team to support your business?					
	How important is this to you?	1	2	3	4	5
	To what extent does ABC perform to your expectations?					
	How important is this to you?	1	2	3	4	5
	To what extent does ABC drive value to you and your business?					
	How important is this to you?	1	2	3	4	5
	To what extent would you recommend ABC to colleagues and friends?					
	How important is this to you?	1	2	3	4	5
KEY WORDS: Please provide up to 10 Key Words that describes your partnership experience with ABC Company?						
1.		6.				
2.		7.				
3.		8.				
4.		9.				
5.		10.				
NEED TO KNOW: Please provide the Top 3 Key Words that we should focus on?						
1.						
2.						
3.						
WHAT WE DO BEST: Please provide the Top 3 Key Words on our strengths?						
1.						
2.						
3.						
Definitely No! Likely No Most Likely Yes! Absolutely, Yes!						
1 = Not Important 5 = Highly Important						

Figure 12.

2.7 SHARING YOUR DATA & INSIGHTS

Most CRM's have an array of dashboards already built in. Make sure you configure the dashboard, so it gives you the information that is important for managing your business. If your dashboard needs are not included then there are several options to procure plug-ins or stand-alone dashboard tools.



Figure 13.

"In today's complex and fast-moving world, what we need even more than foresight or hindsight is insight, giving us the visibility and knowledge from which to make meaningful decisions for our future." – Simon Elliot



RE-CAP

SELF-REFLECTION, REALIZATION, AND ASSESSMENT

In Chapter 2 of TRUE NORTH, we have focused on the critical importance of Self-Reflection as the start of the journey to Self-Realization.

We introduced you to the concept of the 5-Light Risk & Situational Analysis, one identifying Danger and the other assessing acceptability of the current situation through the eyes of your organization, and the level of Pride as a key indicator of organizational satisfaction around the client partnership.

From there, providing a mechanism to group your accounts into the 4-Box Partnership Portfolio matrix giving you the opportunity to triage your accounts into 4 distinct groupings? Growth, Leverage, Invest, or Watch dependent on what their current state is today.

We talked about the importance of Data, of Insights, identifying Stakeholders, soliciting Feedback, and platforms to gather, review, and share data with your team.

Understanding not just what you are, where you are, but what you stand for too is critically important in defining yourself, your team, and your business.

This is your duty, your responsibility, and don't let your clients define it for you as you take the back seat and the decline back into being a vendor versus a strategic partner.



USE-CASE

KNOW WHO YOU ARE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHO YOU WANT TO BE.

Organizations old and new have identity crisis, don't we all! But how do you level set your own organization and try to make sense of your past, your current operating performance to give you clues to what the future direction and strategy might be?

This second chapter of TRUE NORTH provides you with the tools to make sense of it all and provide you with the basis of a roadmap to transformation from current state to future desired and aspired state.

You might be the champion for transformation, or an integral and important part of driving the momentum towards positive change – either way, this is a team effort, and cannot be instigated by just one but needs the buy-in and the support of the many.

Are you ready to lead the charge and drive transformational change within your organization, a sustaining change for GOOD!



TRY THE TRUE NORTH EXERCISES



Go to the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH and follow these exercises. By the end of the work exercises you will have all the elements you need to build your own Strategic Partnership Playbook for your business portfolio.

- E.4** EXERCISE 4: 4-BOX REVIEW
- E.7** EXERCISE 7: CREATE YOUR COMPETITOR LANDSCAPE
- E.9** EXERCISE 9: CREATE YOUR DATA MATRIX
- E.10** EXERCISE 10: IDENTIFY SOURCES OF INSIGHTS AND INTELLIGENCE
- E.11** EXERCISE 11: GATHERING FEEDBACK



CHAPTER 3

YOUR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS



Chapter 3 of TRUE NORTH starts with understanding what's important to your partnerships, common objectives, shared beliefs, and business imperatives. How you grade existing Partnership Health and manage your business with a Portfolio Approach. Defining the difference between Marquee and Strategic Clients and defining what the Ideal Client Profile looks like. Researching clients, Client Influence Map, and Partnership Wiring are all essential ingredients to building and retaining better business.



In the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH, you will find several practical exercises to turn the theory and methodology into practical working documents to build your own Strategic Partnership playbook.





3.1 YOUR PARTNERSHIPS

Now we have been through the TRUE NORTH methodology and approach to Strategic Partnerships, let's start to focus on your existing and prospective partnerships.

“partnership”

[ˈpɑːtnərˌʃɪp]

The state of being a partner or partners.

Synonyms: *cooperation, association, collaboration, coalition, alliance, union, league, confederation, relationship, fellowship.*

The definition of partnership is the state of being a partner or partners. That the parties cooperate, collaborate, work together in unison towards a common aim. It's a relationship, a fellowship, an alliance, a coalition working towards the same goals. A partnership can be a friendship, a marriage, a business relationship, a client, colleague, or an employee.

We have already established that without the foundation of trust, and the partnership being mutually rewarding, true partnership is unlikely to exist, so, what are the building blocks that make up the foundations of a partnership no matter its form?

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✱ Common Objectives | ✱ Shared Beliefs | ✱ Shared Principles |
| ✱ Financial alignment | ✱ Parity of risk, and reward | ✱ Cultural alignment |
| ✱ Shared Commitment | ✱ Equal enthusiasm | ✱ Complimentary attributes |

It is these factors that will help guide you throughout life and business when selecting the right partner in life, in work, and in business. What this means is that the best partnerships no matter their nature are the ones that are carefully selected through these lenses. All too often we jump into partnerships based on proximity, in other words, they just happen to be near you, or you know, know or them, or in business, maybe the Request for Proposal has landed on your desk compelling you to answer it, or should you? Partner profiling is a critical element of selecting the best fit partners that will ultimately result in the best chances of mutual success.



PARTNER PROFILING

I often find myself talking with organizations who have an existing client base and am often surprised by how often there is a lack of analysis – which ones are the best clients? The answer usually is the biggest, but does that mean that these clients are the best? Not necessarily. Sure, revenue is a key parameter, but more important is the profit generated from that client after taking into consideration the cost of doing business with them.

This purview will give you the visibility that allows you to make some decisions across your business, but first, there are many “Laws” in business, and here are a couple that come to mind:



BEWARE: “SALES IS VANITY, PROFIT IS SANITY”

That may well be true in most cases, but for some businesses, market share can also be a valid long-term strategic play. For example, a business that sells 10,000 cars at a high premium could have more profits than one that sells 100,000 cars, however, market-share and dominance could mean better long-term stakeholder return on investments.

I am often surprised how especially in large corporations the principle of profit over sales can be discarded – the reason often lies in how individuals are measured in terms of their performance and remunerated in terms of commissions and bonuses. It is so often the case that salespeople are rewarded on top line revenue vs. profitability. Business and growth leaders take heed, make sure that at least some of your metrics and rewards measurements include profitability.



BE AWARE: PARETO’S LAW OF DISTRIBUTION (THE 80/20 RULE)

Mathematically, the 80/20 rule is roughly described by a power law distribution for a particular set of parameters, and many natural phenomena have been shown to exhibit such a distribution. In its business adage form: “80% of sales come from 20% of clients.” But this may or may not be true in each case and that is what your profiling exercise will tell you.

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.”
– Henry Ford

“strategic”

[strəˈtējɪk]

Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.

Synonyms: *planned, calculated, deliberate, tactical, judicious, prudent, clever, shrewd, well thought out.*

3.2 EXISTING PARTNERSHIP HEALTH

Let's take an opportunity to review your current partnership value taking the key ratings that are appropriate to your business. These will likely be fundamentals like revenue, profit, cost of doing business. But layer in metrics like performance ratings, results, are they a marquee account, a strategic account, are they desirable with all factors considered?

Account	Revenue	Profit (\$)	Profit (%)	Contract Type	Performance Rating	Relationship Rating	Results Rating	Marquis Account	Strategic Account	Desirability Rating
W Stores	\$10.1	\$0.75	7.4	Fixed	38	32	48	~	~	1
Amazon	\$8.1	\$0.68	8.4	Fixed	52	22	44	Y	~	4
Exxon Mobil	\$6.5	\$1.0	15.4	C+	88	42	58	Y	Y	3
Apple	\$6.0	\$0.70	11.6	Fee	92	70	76	Y	Y	5
Ford	\$3.2	\$0.50	16.6	Fee	90	78	76	Y	~	4
Boeing	\$1.0	\$0.22	22.0	Fixed	98	82	48	Y	Y	3

Figure 14.



BE AWARE: MARQUEE AND STRATEGIC ACCOUNTS

Don't get confused between marquee accounts and strategic accounts. They may be but then they may not be the same.

MARQUEE

Marquee clients might be those big names that everyone has heard of and knows and there exists either a brag factor and/or credibility by association but shiny objects don't necessarily bring fame and fortune. There are many instances when the prospect of the prize of a marquee client can blind the business and the commercial terms can end up being a lot less desirable. Be aware that these marquee accounts are usually fully aware of their "curb appeal" and will leverage that during the procurement process.

STRATEGIC

These are clients that meet your Ideal Client Profile, they not only bring revenue but also profitability and harmonious partnerships too. Small, medium, or large, they may or may not have the glamour associated with marquee accounts but in most cases, they bring far more valuable rewards than the former.

DISCLAIMER: There is however a magnetism factor to consider as well. Does having the household name, Unicorn in your portfolio make you more attractive to existing and new business partners? Maybe so, but not at the cost of your strategic fundamentals.

However you present your metrics today, to what extent does it allow you to have the visibility that gives you clarity to what it all really means. How do you measure what falls in line with optimum relationships, and alternatively perhaps what does not? The following exercise allows you to get a clearer view.

Now, translate this same insight into the TRUE NORTH 5-Light Risk and Situational Analysis Review:

Account	Location	Revenue	Profit (\$)	Profit (%)	Cost of Doing Business	Industry	Contract Type	Performance Rating	Relationship Rating	Results Rating	Marquis Account	Strategic Account	Desirability Rating	Overall Rating
W Stores	3	5	3	3	1	2	3	2	2	3	~	~	1	28
Amazon	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	3	4	~	4	39
Exxon Mobil	2	3	5	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	3	50
Apple	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	55
Ford	4	2	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	3	~	4	50
Boeing	4	1	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	3	3	4	3	49

*NOTE: Company names only for the purpose of illustration and do not represent real business relationships.

Figure 15.



Armed with these insights, the business is now able to make meaningful decisions.



ACCOUNT HEALTH BAROMETER

There are many options available to get client feedback and ultimately understand your Account Health. Consider utilizing external resources leveraging impartiality to really understand where you really stand with your partnerships. Of course, there is much of this statistical performance work that can be done in-house but the real value comes when you get indicators that might not otherwise be available through your own direct efforts.

"Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, faithfulness the best relationship." – Buddha



3.3 PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

But wait, it's not always quite that simple. Although profiling your individual partners is critically important, there may well be other factors at play. For example, where you have a dispersed account portfolio, either geographically or by sector, then taking these factors in the aggregate is critical. Overall, as an organization, what is the revenue, the profit, the cost of doing business? But also, as you look across your enterprise, there may be marquee accounts that are prestigious enough that they help with the credibility of your organization in both retention of and attracting new business.

“portfolio”

[pôrt'fōlē, ō]

A range of investments held by a person or organization.

Synonyms: *investments, shares, holdings, securities, equities*

There is an old saying that *“nobody got fired for hiring IBM.”* and that is probably true, but it also applies to credibility by association – if you have an IBM in your portfolio, then it's probably a good thing to keep it, unless of course its losing more money than the advantage of the *“bragging rights”*.

IMAGINE: taking a helicopter view of your business portfolio, inevitably a mix of levels of performance, but through aggregating the visibility will allow you to drive continued high performers, learn from them, and over time nurture the overall portfolio to heightened levels of performance.

“The only thing we know about the future is that it will be different.” – Peter Drucker

3.4 PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT

Now that you have assessed your portfolio, then what next? For larger portfolios and to make the management more efficient and cohesive, allocate each into a “category of care”. As we have been through the process of reviewing your existing portfolio, understanding the success factors in play, then consider their placement into the four suggested categories of Growth, Leverage, Invest, or Watch. As a reminder:

- **GROWTH:** Positive Situation Analysis and Low Risk: Opportunity to leverage position through extension, growth in services or vertical growth.
- **LEVERAGE:** Low Risk, stable Situational Analysis: Opportunity to leverage the relationship by buying time to improve performance.
- **INVEST:** Good Situational Analysis but Higher Risk points to a misalignment that needs to be addressed through the investment of time and resources
- **WATCH:** High Risk, Low Situational Analysis likely require more immediate remedial attention.

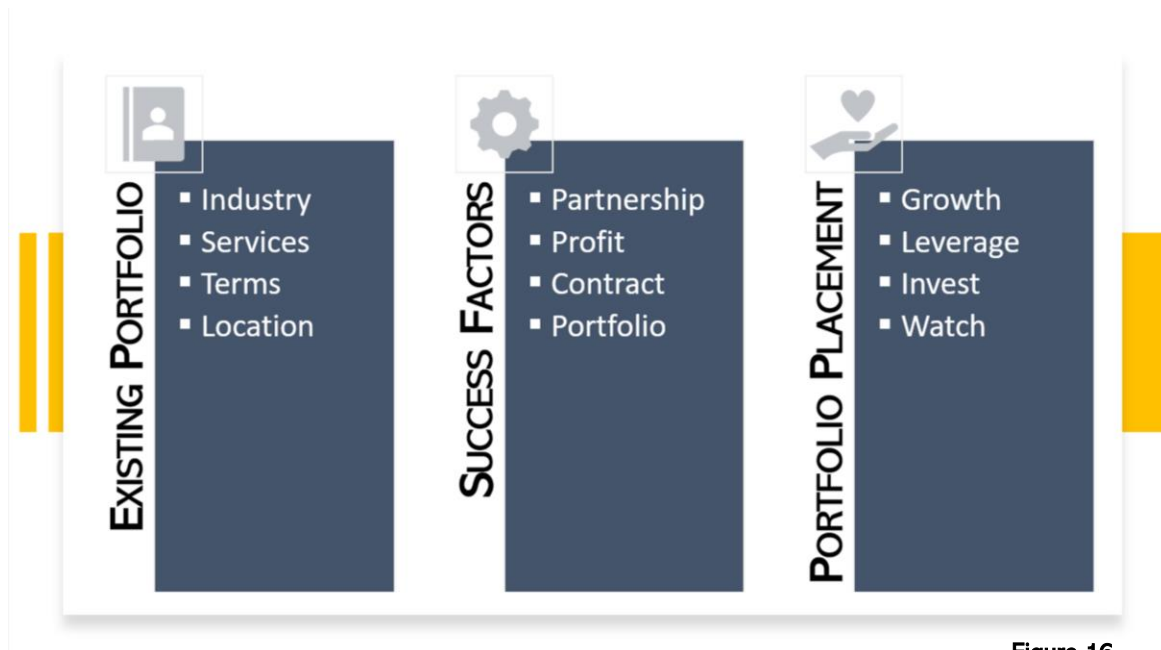


Figure 16.

“Strategy is simply resource allocation. When you strip away all the noise, that’s what it comes down to. Strategy means making clear cut choices about how to compete. You cannot be everything to everybody, no matter what size of your business or how deep its pockets.” – Jack Welch

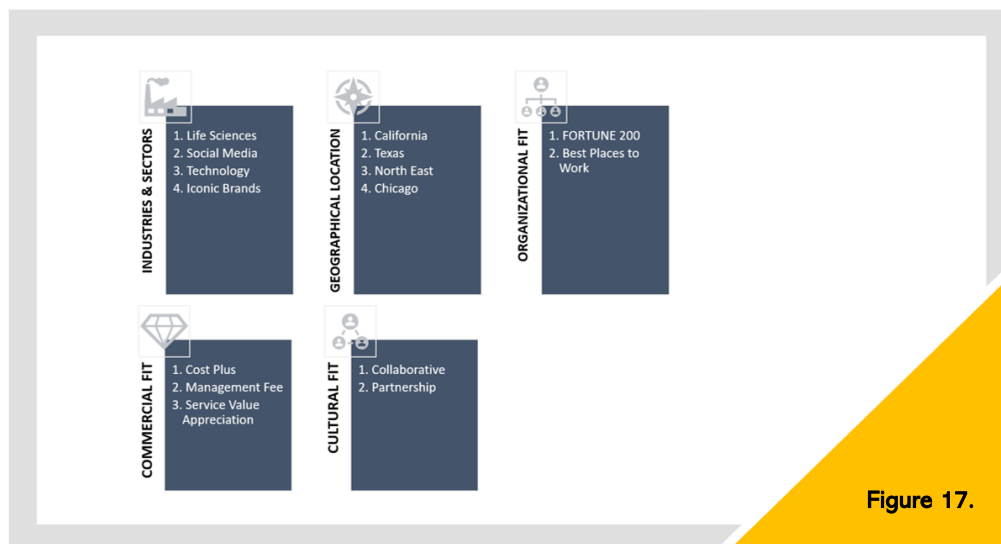
3.5 IDEAL CLIENT PROFILE: NEW BUSINESS

You have now assessed your current portfolio; this will give you clues as to where you perform well and perhaps not. This will also give you signs of what type of clients are best for your business and the environments and terms where you excel. It's competitive out there, so understanding your Client Portfolio, and having a self-awareness of what type of sales organization you are today and want to be in the future will have a direct correlation to your future success.

How can you use this insight to establish a methodology that identifies your Ideal Client Profile, and what does this mean?

Why Build your Ideal Client Profile?

- ✱ More likely to resonate with client
- ✱ Higher conversion ratios
- ✱ More valued, more profitable business
- ✱ Reduce lower value effort
- ✱ Maximize resource effectiveness
- ✱ Likely improve long-term retention



As you can see, this example gives you a clear selection criterion that allows you to then research on this basis and only include those organizations that are a best fit for your organization. You can then build your actual list of Ideal Clients and commence the research and create specific Action Plans against each. Remember, this is a long-term strategy and not simply an advertising campaign – this is about building long-term relationships, partnerships, opportunity, and sustainable growth.

“To be strategic is to concentrate on what is important, on those few objectives that can give us a comparative advantage, on what is important to us rather than others, and to plan and execute the resulting plan with determination and steadfastness.” – Richard Koch



BE AWARE: SHINY OBJECTS

From time to time, shiny objects will undoubtedly come up along your journey. Just like no one got fired for hiring IBM, equally no one got fired for being hired by them either. BUT are they the right fit for your organization? How much attention and resource will you expend? How much of a disruption will they bring?

Take care when shiny objects do appear - ensure you revisit your Ideal Client Profile and maintain your focus.

The advice here is not to immediately reject potential marquee opportunities but to tread carefully. The Ideal Client List should be realistic and logical, and not aspirational and the stuff of dreams.

“Ideal Client Profiling will likely be one of the most important things you can do for future business and growth success – there’s something magical that happens when doing business with organizations that are aligned and want to do business with you.” – Jackie Cupper



3.6 CLIENT RESEARCH

No two individuals are the same. Different values, drivers, motivations, different stages of life, or career. Different needs, wants, expectations and motivations. So, understanding these is crucial in understanding how best to deal with each of your clients. It's also of imperative importance that you not only address the clients that you do know, but maybe even more importantly the ones that you don't.

“personal”

[ˈpɜrs(ə)n(ə)l]

Of, affecting, or belonging to a particular person rather than anyone else. Of or concerning one's private life, relationships, and emotions that may also include matters connected with one's public or professional career.

Synonyms: *characteristic, individual, particular, private, unique, distinctive.*



BEWARE: “THE CLIENT LOVES US” SYNDROME

How often have you heard that the client loves us and everything in the garden is rosy, then next you know there has been a change of client, resulting in a change of heart and lost business? There are a couple of factors at play here:

1. Client organizations are complex with multiple opinions and perceptions within.
2. The day-to-day client is unlikely to be the only decision maker and there are multiple influencers.
3. Human nature is that people general don't like to tell you you're doing only an OK job.
4. Your competition is knocking on your client's door every single day.

Don't fall into this trap. Check in with your client groups, all of them, and get regular feedback on how your performance is being perceived. Put in place feedback mechanisms, either internal or external to get regular access to this crucial data.

CLIENT INFLUENCE MAP

Take a list of your clients and roles and map out the influence landscape. Who has the Authority and Approval rights? Who makes the final Finance decision, powers of Veto? Who measures you for Compliance, Negotiate, and what is the scale of Influence that each have in the process?

Name	Role	Authority	Approval	Finance	Veto	Compliance	Negotiate	Influence
Tom Smith	Leadership	5	5		5			
Mary McGuire	Financial	4	4	5	3	2		
Alan Prosser	Technical		1	2	2	4	4	3
Sara Robson	Super User	3	3	3	4	3	3	5
Lan Chi	Passive Influencer							4
Arnold Agandi	Passive Influencer							3
Hope James	Vocal Influencer							3
Bryan Jones	Consumer							2
Mandy Martinez	Consumer							2



Detractor

Lacking
Support

Even-Keel



Supporter



Advocate

1
Lowest
Influence2
Low
Influence3
Mid
Influence4
High
Influence5
Highest
Influence

MAXIMIZE THE GREEN, ELIMINATE THE REDS

What can you do to optimize your Influence Map? You might not be able to change the levels of influence, but you certainly can help move the Reds to Black to Green's, even to Purples.

"The Client Influence Map will likely be one of the most valuable activities that you will undertake in terms of understanding your real position with your partners, but also as a fundamental foundation to partnership, retention, and growth." – Simon Elliot

3.7 PARTNERSHIP WIRING: CLIENTS & PROSPECTS

Simply understanding the Client Influence Map is important but how do you engage with existing advocates and supporters, to win over those who are neutral and turn reds and ambers to green, even purple. As you build this, you will naturally schedule interactions and the next stage would be building an engagement plan for everyone in the sphere of influence.

Moreover, there are a multitude of personas within your client group, at different levels and roles and with different inputs that could impact your partnership longevity. It's important to understand these:

- ✳ **Leadership:** Unlikely in a day-to-day role, but with authority to approve, finance, and veto.
- ✳ **Financial:** Self-explanatory, hold the purse strings, authority to approve, finance, and veto.
- ✳ **Technical:** Often the procurement team, checking you tick all the boxes, and negotiate with you.
- ✳ **Super User:** This is the individual that likely is the day-to-day liaison, good to have as a coach.
- ✳ **Passive Influencer:** Provides opinions and feedback when asked.
- ✳ **Vocal Influencer:** Provides opinions and feedback as they like.
- ✳ **Consumer:** This is the individual(s) that use your product or service sometimes daily.

Identifying the sphere of influence in each of your partnerships is an imperative step to mapping out the complexity of your partnership relationships.

Client Side		Advocacy Rating	Company Side	
Name	Title		Name	Title
Tom Smith	CEO & President	3	James Saunders	President
Mary McGuire	Chief Financial Officer	3	Sally Jamison	Chief Financial Officer
Alan Prosser	Procurement Officer	2	Brad Smith	Director Business Development
Sara Robson	VP Workplace Experience	4	Terri Mascone	Chief Operating Officer
Lan Chi	Human Resources Officer	4	Layla Harris	Human Resources Officer
Arnold Agandi	Work Experience Design	3	Tony Amola	VP Marketing
Hope James	VP Operations	2	Bryan Bowles	District Manager
Bryan Jones	Accounts Payable	3	Jane Marsden	Account Manager
Mandy Martinez	Administration Manager	1	Jane Marsden	Account Manager



3.8 TARGET ACCOUNTS

So, by now, you have largely taken care of understanding your existing portfolio and the best way in which to optimize your existing relationships, but what about the pursuit of new partnerships in line with the criteria you have already established?

You know where you operate the best, have the best partnerships, under what conditions, in what sectors, geographies, and now you can start to build your go-forward pipeline.

Look at your current pipeline, your target accounts, your aspirational accounts. From your Ideal Client Profile, gather the information on the organizations that fit the criteria and assemble a list of likely candidates for you to complete a full assessment of potential partnership suitability.



Figure 17.

Target Account (Ideal Client Profile)	Industry	Geography	Organization Fit	Contract Arrangements	Value on Products/Services	Cultural Fit	Overall
Airbus	4	3	3	2	2	3	17
Nike	5	4	4	4	4	4	25
Tesla	4	5	4	3	3	4	23
General Motors	4	3	4	3	2	3	21
Nissan	4	3	4	3	2	3	21
Google	5	5	4	4	5	4	27
Microsoft	5	4	4	4	4	4	25
Chevron	4	5	3	2	3	2	19
BP	4	3	3	3	3	3	19
Genentech	5	5	5	3	4	5	27

*NOTE: Company names only for the purpose of illustration and do not represent real business relationships.

Figure 18.

**BEWARE: DON'T LET THIS IMPORTANT WORK GATHER DUST**

As with all the exercises in this book, these are important processes, and each has a critical role in the overall Strategic Partnership process. The purpose of this is not to be some administrative task but for the purposes of driving the behaviors needed to make an impact and really make a difference to the levels of partner satisfaction, retention, and growth.

"Focus on your strengths, not your weaknesses. Focus on your character, not your reputation. Focus on your blessings, not your misfortunes." – Roy T. Bennett



RE-CAP

GETTING INTO THE DETAIL

Chapter 3 of TRUE NORTH gets into the nitty gritty of how Partnerships work, their make-up and dynamics. How to assess your current Partner Portfolio, the subtle difference between Marquee Accounts and Strategic Accounts, and how to measure, assess, and stack-rank your portfolio.

What are the Success Factors? the Ideal Client Profile? How do you use this insight to plan your go-forward growth activities – through a planned and careful selection process where you target those clients and partners which furnish you with the best possibilities of success, but also the best chance of long-term success leading to Strategic Partnership.

We go through how to assess your current Client Relationships, identify the different individuals, influencers, what makes them tick, and how you organize the Client Wiring to optimize connections, relationships, maximize strengths and address or remove obstacles that may stand in the way of progress and advancement.

Then, to use these insights to establish your go-forward growth plan - who to target, where, what industry, why, and what the right messaging is to engage and convert.

TRUE NORTH takes you through each of the steps from your self-realization to understanding, to creating tangible action plans for change and transformation for the GOOD and for the BETTER.



USE-CASE

UNTANGLING THE WIRES AND MAKING CONNECTIONS.

New job. Day one. “What’s your most important client?” Response: “The Great Big Shiny One.” How much do we make there?” The eyes go to the ground and the shuffling of feet. It seems the big shiny client is being propped up by the rest of the business, nevertheless.

“Our relationships there must be great?” More shuffling of feet. “What about our growth on the back of the account?” George looks over hopefully at one of the sales reps, she just smiled and shrugged her shoulders, I moved on.

Do you have an Account Plan for the Big Shiny One?” I asked. George beamed as he went over to a filing cabinet and pulled out a dusty file full of papers and lots of blue, green and gold sheets. “Oh great, show me the latest one,” I asked. George looked flustered and pulled out a dog-eared document, “We did this last year.” He offered.

It was clear I had my work cut out and would need to employ every element of TRUE NORTH to reconnect this business with reality.



TRY THE TRUE NORTH EXERCISES



Go to the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH and follow these exercises. By the end of the work exercises you will have all the elements you need to build your own Strategic Partnership Playbook for your business portfolio.

- E.3** EXERCISE 3: STACK RANK YOUR EXISTING PORTFOLIO
- E.5** EXERCISE 5: IDEAL CLIENT PROFILE
- E.8** EXERCISE 8: IDENTIFY YOUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS
- E.12** EXERCISE 12: CREATE YOUR CLIENT INFLUENCE MAP
- E.13** EXERCISE 13: CREATE YOUR PARTNERSHIP CONNECTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT MAP
- E.14** EXERCISE 14: CREATE YOUR TARGET ACCOUNTS LIST



CHAPTER 4

ONWARD



Chapter 4 of TRUE NORTH starts out with the principles of the Value Promise and how beyond the basis of Trust, that Talent plays an enormously important part as you package your proposition, and translate your true value, innovation, terms of business, and craft your sales story leveraging emotional connections to build advocacy, long-term loyalty, and mutual success. Build your Audience, your Pipeline, and your Partnership Plan culminating in your Strategic Partnership Charter.



In the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH, you will find several practical exercises to turn the theory and methodology into practical working documents to build your own Strategic Partnership playbook.



4.1 SELLING VS. SOLUTIONS

Many people shudder at the thought of “selling”. For some it makes them think of an adversarial transaction between someone who has something to sell and someone who has the money to buy it, sometimes regardless if they need it or not. There are many stereotypes and phrases that depict this misconception including “he can sell ice to Eskimo’s”, or used car salesmen, or time share sales reps pushing you into buying something that maybe you don’t even need.

Selling solutions vs. just selling is a completely different mindset. Think about how you can solve the problems and challenges of your partner, above selling what you have on your shelves. Take your time to Listen, Learn, and Understand, and if and how you can help. Have the courage to lead, yet the courage to decline too, remembering that Trust and Credibility are your long-term assets, not short-term, in the moment wins. Finally, remember, that to have true partnerships, each party needs to be recognizing the value, in other words, win-win partnerships are the only successful ones.

“courage”

[ˈkɜːrɪj]

The ability to do something that frightens oneself. Strength in the face of adversity.

Synonyms: *bravery, pluck, valor, fearlessness, intrepidity, nerve, boldness, dauntlessness.*

Look at sales as a process of solving client problems and satisfying their needs. At the end of the day, most people feel comfortable helping someone, and take pleasure in seeing positive outcomes as a result.

This is the same contrast as between Sales and Growth, the archetypal salesperson is in it for the short term, the sales solutions person is vested in the clients immediate and long-term success and is likely to stay around to ensure that success versus the legendary sales guy or girl who rides off into the sunset with their commission check never to be seen or heard of again.

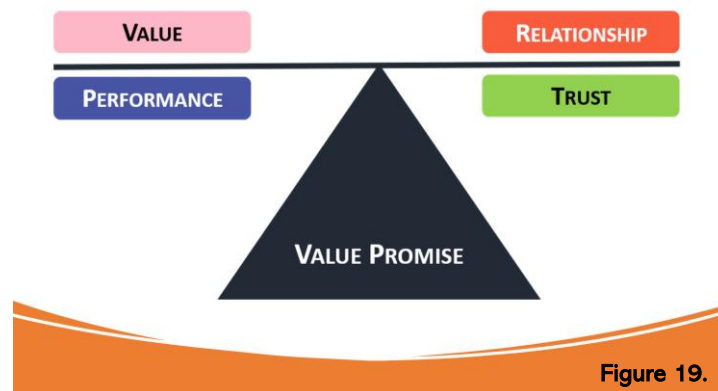


Figure 19.

“The most successful sales organizations are those that focus on the long-term gain of all parties. They look at partnerships, not transactions, and they focus on mutually successful outcomes not short-term, one sided wins.” – Barbara Boden



The successful strategic seller will understand that to deliver the Value Promise, then there are 5 areas of balance to be struck to craft a set of solutions that make for a sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership including:

- ✱ **Trust:** as discussed earlier, without trust then there is no foundation for sustainable partnership
- ✱ **Relationship:** foundations are sufficiently strong to mutually Listen, to Learn, and to Understand
- ✱ **Value Promise:** the product, service, or thing meets a need, solves a challenge, and is achievable
- ✱ **Value:** the solution drives value and benefit to the client organization
- ✱ **Performance:** It can perform and deliver the results and outcome expectations set



BE AWARE: SETTING THE STAGE FOR GROWTH

Too many sales leaders simply revert to the process of setting quotas, managing sales pipelines, funnels, shepherding the sales reps to do more, often with less. If they make their annual targets, and in turn the sales manager makes their bonus, everyone's happy, but should they be?

Although this is fine in fast moving product market where your sales team is simply filling an existing demand, the more complex offering requires a more sophisticated approach, and that is about setting the right conditions for sustainable growth. The right people, with the right attributes, with the right approach, methodology, and long-term strategic commitment to growth and not just In-The-Year sales.

4.2 TALENT IS KEY

“talent”

[ˈtælənt]

A natural aptitude or skill. People possessing talent. A term to describe the level of skill and aptitude within a team or organization.

Synonyms: *flair, aptitude, gift, knack, technique, ability.*

So now that we have established that Consultative Selling, or Solutions Sales is the right path to build sustainable, profitable business, what are the attributes required to succeed? Although there are many opinions on this, here is a list of what's most commonly recognized as essential attributes of a successful strategic consultative growth leader:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| ✱ Ability to Listen, Learn & Understand | ✱ Intellectual approach |
| ✱ Emotional Intelligence | ✱ Thoughtful Empathy |
| ✱ Determined Optimism | ✱ Focused & Driven |
| ✱ Curious and hunger to Learn | ✱ High levels of Humility |
| ✱ Resilience and Endurance | ✱ Methodical and Detailed |
| ✱ Collaborative & Communicative | ✱ Ability to Educate & Inspire |
| ✱ Courageous & Bold | ✱ Challenge the Status Quo |

Although all these elements are important, the last two on the list are the ones that can make the difference between an above average performer to one that excels and leads the drive for growth.

I recently reviewed the *Ennea International* Five Lens review process, and such platforms and methodologies are a great path for personal development to understand more about your own personality, where you are in life, and how your attitudes translate into characteristics and behaviors. Through the lenses of Personal Mastery, Energy Centers, Social Drives, and Emotional Resilience, the questionnaire and ultimately personality report look at: Quality, Service, Delivery, Creativity, Insight, Vigilance, Vision, Drive, and Harmony as points of reference. Measuring your responses through each of these lenses gives you a deep understanding of who you are, your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Understanding this level of insight is essential in the process of building a high performing team for your future right across your organization, and with action driven follow up, substantial long-term benefit to your business outlook.

FIVE LENS

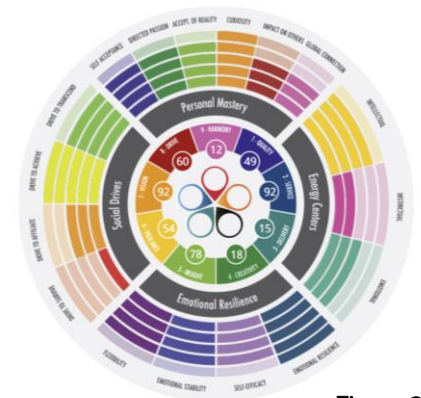


Figure 20.

“The real issue is not talent as an independent element, but talent in relationship to will, desire and persistence.” – Milton Glaser

4.3 PACKAGING YOUR PROPOSITION

So, you have your product, your service. It may be that it's new, or legacy, it may have and may well evolve. The fact that it does what it claims is a cost of entry, the technical details of what it has under the hood are for the geeks, the look and the feel are important, but most of all, the single most important part of your proposition today is, what is it like as an experience for your partners, clients, consumers, and, don't forget your employees – the most successful companies take a 360 degree view of all their stakeholders and focus on the experience for all.

“proposition”

[.prəpə'ziʃ(ə)n]

A suggested plan of action. A project, task, or idea considered in terms of its likely success or difficulty. The packaging of solutions to solve a challenge, problem or need.

Synonyms: *proposals, plan, project, manifesto, offering, motion, presentation, suggestion, package, offering, recommendation, approach, venture.*

In that context, how is your proposition packaged in such a way? What does it do? Why does it do it? How does it do it? What is the impact? How does it make me feel? And what value does it create?

A really great example of how an entire industry is focused on Experience MATTERS is the automotive industry and how they package their proposition to their consumers:



Power, beauty and soul



Vorsprung durch Technik
(progress through technology)



Sheer Driving Pleasure



Go Further



Innovation That Excites



HONDA

The Power of Dreams



The Art of Performance



Above & Beyond



It's a Mini adventure



TOYOTA

Let's go places

Not one of these examples talks about the product itself but moreover about how ownership makes one feel, alludes to the experience associated with each of the brands, and one could argue also associates with the personality/profile types of each of its profiled customer groups. Remember, these automotive companies also have a real value in gaining customer loyalty, and in many cases manage to acquire customers for life – an interesting parallel and lesson for other industries, sectors, and businesses.

CONSIDER: Emotions drive Engagement & Loyalty, More than mere Utility.



EXPERIENCE MATTERS!

CONSISTENCY

An often-missed principle – customers and consumers gain comfort and confidence in the consistency of an experience. Knowing what to expect provides a level of satisfaction, an art the likes of McDonald's have worked hard to perfect, FedEx is another example of limited bells and whistles but confidence that they will get the job done, Southwest airlines has no executive lounges, or First-Class cabins, just gets you from A to B but has droves of loyal customers.

QUALITY

Quality on the other hand is a different level of experience that adds a layer of comfort, brand loyalty, and even a willingness to pay more. Apple Stores are a perfect example of the combination of the two, as is Emirate Airlines, or the immersive experience you get from Mini ownership.

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." – Albert Einstein

4.4 TRANSLATING YOUR VALUE

Understanding the value that you bring to a partner relationship is critical. Again, this might sound obvious but all too often this is lost in translation. This is about setting out the value proposition at the very heart of the strategic partnership plan. This cannot be a one-sided calculation otherwise the danger is that it becomes a conversation of cost versus value.

“value”

[ˈvæljuː]

The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.

Synonyms: merit, worth, usefulness, use, utility, practicality, advantage, desirability.

The basis of how you agree to drive value should be set at the outset of your relationships from the very first conversations, through discovery and through transition, and reviewed on an ongoing basis. Every conversation, every document, report, communication should be reiterating the value both parties bring to the partnership.



Figure 21.

As an important part of your proposition review, it is critical to explore your value proposition, prod it and poke it, stand in the shoes of your partners, and really dig into what your value is, how you measure it, and how you communicate it to realize your full potential and worth.

“First, you must have entrepreneurs who fully grasp their customers. They understand their product so well because they themselves are customers. The second thing is having an awesome value proposition.” – Craig Sherman



BEWARE: A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

Many times, I have seen partnership leaders cutting costs to make budget, giving concessions that reduce profitability, removing people to save headcount, forgiving pricing increases to “keep the peace”. All these actions and behaviors fly in the face of the principles of partnership:

- * Through simply cutting cost you are reducing resources which in some way will have an impact on the experience, and mostly in a negative way.
- * Similarly, removing headcount to meet budget will have a negative impact.
- * Surrendering on concessions and not taking pricing increases will stifle the business long-term.

These actions and behaviors are what I call the “Race to the Bottom” and should be avoided at all costs. Particular attention should be applied to “*needy*” accounts where your leaders see these actions as a short-term gain, often linked with personal performance metrics and bonuses at the cost of, and in direct conflict with, the longer-term play of strategic partnership.

4.5 RESEARCH: CLIENT COMPANIES

You've packaged your proposition and defined, fine-tuned and calculated your value proposition, but what do companies really want?

For most large companies, it's relatively easy to get this information by reading the Annual Report, their Vision, Mission, Values and their results for the previous year(s) and their stated intent for the coming year(s). For smaller organizations however this isn't always so obvious, and in some cases the leadership may or may not have a firm grasp of their long-term vision beyond survival, or simply doing better than they did last year.

“imperative”

[əm'perədɪv]

An essential or urgent thing. A factor of influence making something necessary. An important initiative, process, or strategy essential to the achievement of one's goals.

Synonyms: requirement, essential, priority, importance, requirement.

Taking time to understand these imperative factors is essential in crafting your approach. Look at the following areas as examples of focus to create a clear picture of each of your partners.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✱ Financial Performance | ✱ Financial Outlook | ✱ Legislative Impact |
| ✱ Profitability (\$/%) | ✱ Industry Prospects | ✱ Employee Turnover Rate |
| ✱ Balance Sheet | ✱ Economic Conditions | ✱ CEO Approval Rating |
| ✱ Credit Rating | ✱ Stated Objectives | ✱ Subsidiaries & Partnerships |

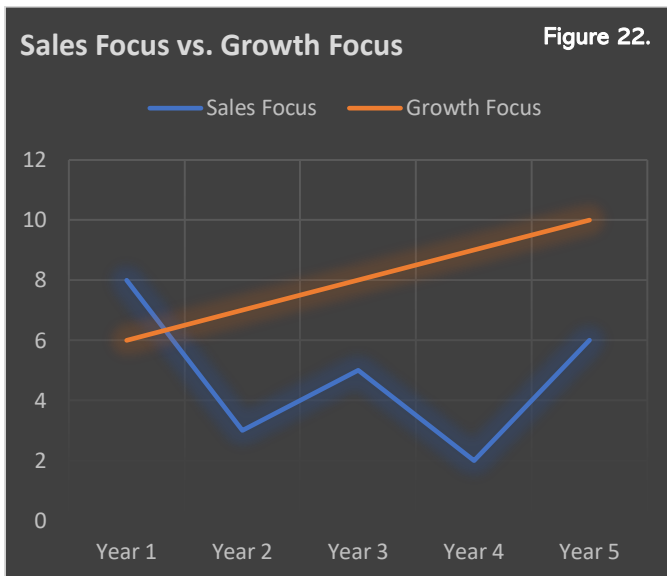


INSIGHTS DRIVE INTELLIGENT DECISIONS

Gathering insights right across your business, inside and out is a strategic priority for all business, and critically in understanding your client partnerships, what makes your clients tick, what challenges and opportunities exist, and therefore how you can deliver value to them beyond simply the products or services you provide. This research will provide you with the road signs to driving a deeper strategic partnership and value to your clients and partners.

“I describe management as arts, crafts and science. It is a practice that draws on arts, crafts, science and there is a lot of craft – meaning experience – there is a certain amount of insight, creativity and vision, and there is the use of science, technique or analysis.” – Henry Mintzberg

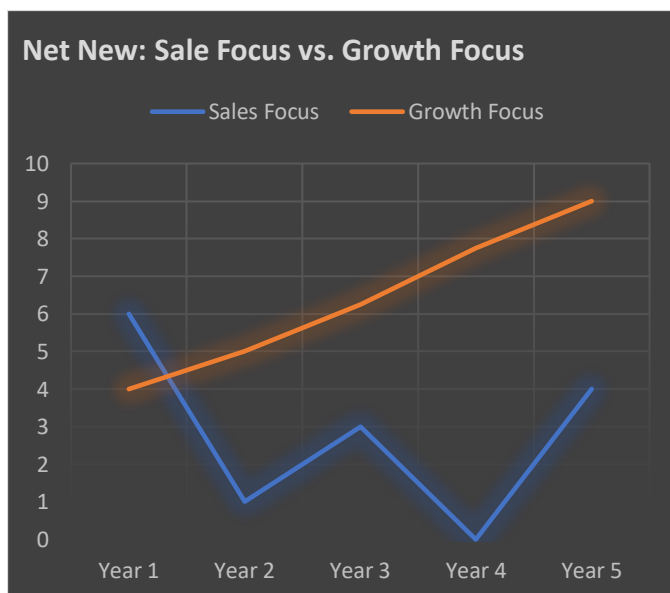
4.6 SALES VS. GROWTH



I have had many conversations over the years around sales vs. growth as a concept. Sales being in the year, in the business cycle wins and usually focused on quotas, it the year budgets, commissions and bonuses. By nature, this approach is short-term and often results in clunky results – some years are golden, others mediocre and some even barren. Coupled with the “*Win more than you lose*” strategy – this approach can make for long-term mediocrity and even stagnation.

On the other hand, setting a long-term growth strategy not only takes courage and nerve but can be a long term glidepath to attractive and profitable growth.

This illustration demonstrates the point, and with a cumulative new business of \$24M through purely a sales focus, a more determined and strategic trajectory of \$40M can be achieved and avoiding the peaks and troughs of the former.



NET NEW GROWTH

If you assume that through a strategic growth approach you will not only sell more but through establishing a robust strategic partnership management program you will lose less business.

In this example, we have assumed that annual losses will continue at a rate of \$2M each year and under the new strategic partnership framework this number will be reduced to \$1M over the 5-year period.

The result? A cumulative \$18M improvement over the 5-year period, or almost a 125%+ improvement in that time.

NOTE* Based on \$100M baseline business.

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.” – Sir. Winston Churchill



RESEARCH: INSIGHTS

Gathering insights right across your business, inside and out is a strategic priority, and critical in truly understanding your client partnerships, what makes them tick, what challenges and opportunities exist, and therefore how you can deliver value to them way beyond simply the products or services you provide. This research will provide you with the road signs to driving a deeper strategic partnership and value to your clients and partners.

"Designing a winning strategy is the art of asking questions, experimenting and then constantly renewing the thinking process by questioning the answers. No matter how good today's strategy is, you must always keep reinventing it." – Constantinos Markides

4.7 INNOVATION

If everything we have talked about so far is your foundations and framework, then there are two success factors that are your lifeblood as an organization, Talent, and Innovation. Without these two, no matter your foundations, they will fade over time, it is these two, and especially Innovation that will keep you ahead, in the lead, and meeting your clients' needs and hunger for progress. This in turn will help them keep ahead, another indication of the symbiotic relationship you have with your client's businesses, not just providing a product or service but helping them keep ahead of their own competition.

“innovation”

[.inəˈvāSH(ə)n]

Of, affecting, or belonging to a particular person rather than anyone else. Of or concerning one's private life, relationships, and emotions that may also include matters connected with one's public or professional career.

Synonyms: *characteristic, individual, particular, private, unique, distinctive.*

As organizations think about innovation there are many considerations to understand in order to address this important aspect for future development and progress:

- ✱ Do you have a culture that supports the progress of innovation?
- ✱ Are your teams incentivized and rewarded for the risk taking required in the pursuit of innovation?
- ✱ Do you have line of sight and access to innovation outside of your own eco-system?
- ✱ Do you have the right levels of investment in place to support the pursuit of innovation?

These are just some of the questions to determine if innovation should be an internal function, or the consideration of external resources to drive new products, services, technologies to keep your business ahead of the pack.

Just like a sales pipeline, the Innovation Pipeline needs topping up as innovations fall out along the way – all will not make it to fruition.

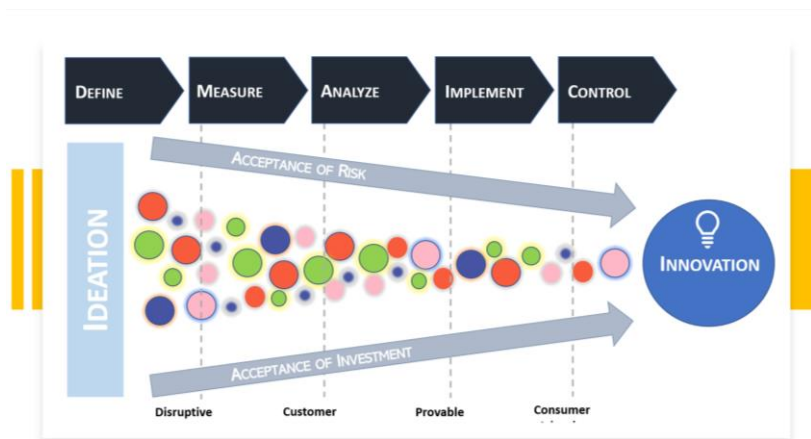


Figure 24.

"The zipper displaces the button and man lacks just that much time to think while dressing at dawn, a philosophical hour, and thus a melancholy hour." – Ray Bradbury

4.8 TERMS OF BUSINESS

So, you have got this far along your Strategic Partnership planning journey, and before you start crafting and articulating your message, what are the terms of business that you go to market with? What does your standard agreement look like, and most importantly how does it encourage the right framework within which to drive the mutual success described?

Clearly, there are many different types of contractual agreements, sometimes on your paper and sometimes on client paper but what are those principles that you push for to get to Strategic Partnership. Here are some principles for you to consider:

What considerations are important to you and partnership success. What levels of risk and reward encourage the right behaviors? What is the right term, is it aligned with the levels of investment required to fuel the right outcomes? What about mutuality, liability? What about payment terms?

These are just some of the considerations as you think about terms of business that are mutually acceptable, mutually rewarding, and they encourage and drive the behaviors and actions of both parties as a foundation to mutual success.

The terms of business will likely survive the individuals involved today and the spirit of your agreement needs to be captured to ensure long-term success.

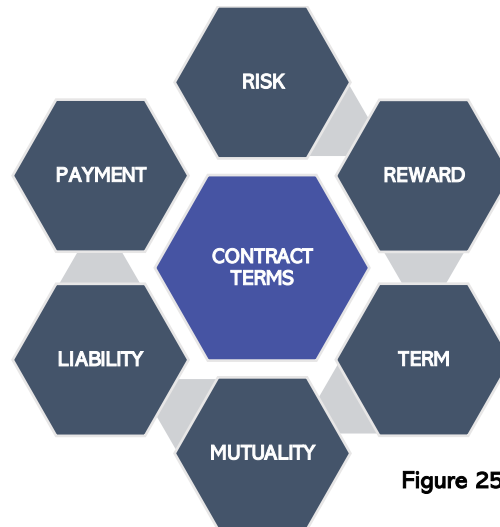


Figure 25.



CONTRACT TYPE

You've already established the types of contract that historically you perform better in than others, and maybe this needs to be your starting point. It might be a Cost-Plus type arrangement or on a Management Fee basis, but even a Fixed Cost contract can be OK with the right terms. The essence of the contract should have a spirit of mutuality, including in such areas as: a commitment to partnership, sharing both risk and reward, incentives versus penalties, and that the contracting parties are mutually aligned and to success.

"It is a very sobering feeling to be up in space and realize that one's safety factor was determined by the lowest bidder of a government contract." – Alan Shepard



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The terms of business need to include measures of success spanning performance metrics across both compliance and value. These should embrace the desired performance that ultimately drives the achievement of jointly agreed targets and goals. Here's some examples of both KPI's and as importantly VPI's:

Key Performance Indicators

For those in contracting, KPI's are a much common place and might include such measurements as:

- ✱ Safety
- ✱ Contract Compliance
- ✱ Operational Performance
- ✱ Financial Performance
- ✱ People

Value Performance Indicators

Then think about those issues outside of the norm that when aligned will help the achievement of higher level strategic and cultural alignment in the partnership, such as:

- ✱ Sustainability
- ✱ Diversity
- ✱ Community
- ✱ Philanthropy

There is no one size fits all approach, these KPI's and VPI's should be and will be unique to each individual partnership agreement.

4.9 CRAFTING YOUR SALES STORY

OK, you're ready to go. Now think about pulling it all together into one package and articulating your message in an easy to understand, and memorable way. This will be your opportunity to wrap up your overall proposition and engage with your audience.

“storytelling”

[ˈstôre̞ teliNG]

The activity of telling or writing stories.

Synonyms: *tale, narrative, account, recital, anecdote, chronicle, history.*

Think about all the aspects addressed so far, and think about how people care for experiences, over reams of data. Think about how people remember stories and often forget statistics. Think about interest levels and attention span. Consider who your audience(s) is and craft the pitch accordingly. Think about TV ads and how they get their point across quickly, about simplicity and ease of access and use. Like the car companies example earlier, consider how you can establish an emotional connection with your audience to gain a higher level of engagement.

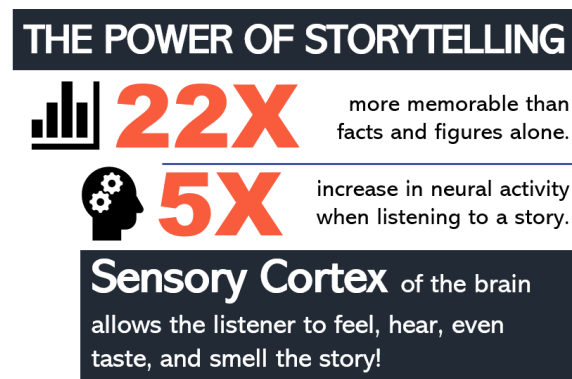


Figure 26.

Think less about the product and its technical specification, and more about what the outcomes are, what the value is and therefore what is the sizzle and attraction.

Here's some things to consider when crafting your story:

- ✱ History: People feel confident in understanding your connection to the past
- ✱ Emotional Connections: Articulate how your product and service makes people feel
- ✱ What it is: Leave the reader in no doubt what it is (see below point on pictures)
- ✱ What does it do: What problem does it solve, what value it creates?
- ✱ How does it work?
- ✱ Where do I get it?
- ✱ What does it cost?

Focus in on what your selling story and in that context, what is the *large print* and what is the *small print* needed to express your proposition in such a way that it stands out, it is memorable, and it is easy to understand.



"If I had asked my customers what they wanted, they would have probably told me a fast horse." – the legendary quote attributed to Henry Ford

A PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS: Humans are visual, and this accounts for around 80% of our learning capability. Include pictures that tells your story, better still, if a picture tells a thousand words, a video tells one million.

4.10 ESTABLISHING YOUR AUDIENCE

You've identified your strengths, your Ideal Client Profiles, your messaging, now you're ready to build your audience and raise the awareness of your organization within your eco-system and beyond. There are many ways in which you can engage with your audience including straight advertising in print, email blasts, and on social media, attending and exhibiting at industry conferences but probably the creation of interesting, engaging, and relevant content to your audience is probably the most effective – as opposed to pushing, attracting your audience to meaningful and relevant content is infinitely more valuable.

“audience”

[ˈôdēəns]

The assembled spectators or listeners at a public event, such as a play, movie, concert, or meeting. The constituents that have a need or an interest in the topic.

Synonyms: *spectators, listeners, onlookers, supporters, following, clientele, devotees, aficionados.*

So, thinking about the groupings of your audience, think all inclusively:

- ✱ Internal audience: beyond education on the key messaging, this is likely your largest sales team!
- ✱ Partners: your suppliers, providers, partnership network
- ✱ Advocates: your connections, colleagues current and past, your professional networks
- ✱ Clients: happy clients are your best source of recommendation
- ✱ Prospects: those organizations that have a need for your services, including your Ideal Client Profiles

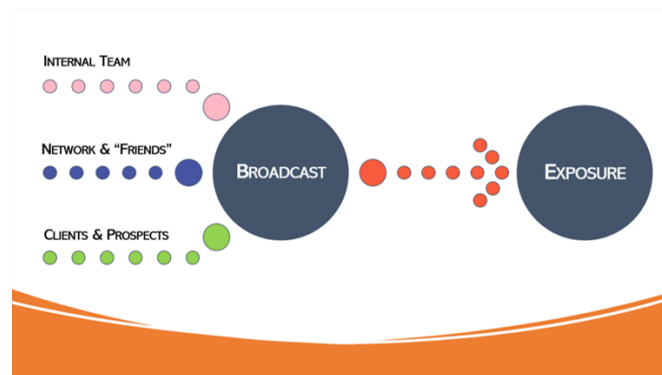


Figure 27.



MAKING IT PERSONAL: IT'S ABOUT THEM, NOT YOU!

Put yourself in the shoes of the recipients, the viewers and think about “How does it make me feel”? Is the content interesting? Is it relevant, insightful? Is it all about the supplier or is it about me? What insights does it share? What is it teaching me? What value does it bring? The more that you inspire your audience to engage with your content, the more exposure you will have and ultimately more success in client acquisition.



CHOOSING YOUR CRM

You may already have a CRM in place, you may consider replacing or introducing a new one, but whatever your status, to have a CRM is essential to enable, track and monitor your growth activities and audience engagement. There are several options available from deep enterprise integrated platforms, intuitive platforms that are easy to use, to very simple versions with limited functionality, some are even free! But what you do need is a platform for you to upload your audience contacts, grow them, and as you post, mail, reach out, that they can track your level of engagement, and therefore monitor the relationship between activity, investment, and success.

"CRM doesn't have to be hard, if you plan for how all the pieces will work together BEFORE you start your implementation." – Lars Helgeson

4.11 BUILD YOUR PIPELINE

Building your pipeline of opportunities is an essential part of the process. Through your marketing efforts you will increase awareness and from that have the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with prospects which in turn lead to proposing a set of solutions which give the client time to consider, ask questions, clarification and hopefully convert into a customer.

“pipeline”

[ˈpīpˌlīn]

A sales pipeline is a visual representation of sales prospects and where they are in the purchasing process.

Stages: *lead generation, prospecting, qualification, proposal, post proposal, commitment, sale, after sale.*

Different business and sectors have different conversion ratios, and you should adjust the calculations specifically for yourself, however, having pipeline conversion metrics is important as you not only measure your performance but also monitor how many prospects you need in each stage of the funnel to achieve your growth aspirations or targets.

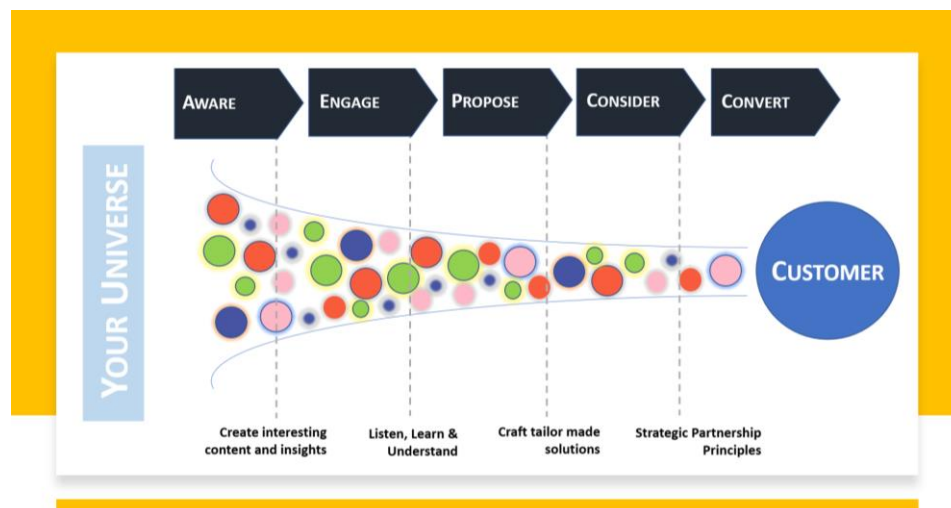


Figure 28.



CONVERSION RATIOS

CONSIDER THIS: If you win 1 in every 3 proposals you need to engage with 10 prospects and to drive that, you need to gain awareness with 100 prospects, then this becomes a game of math.

Let's say, each converted client is worth \$1 Million in revenues, well what does that mean in terms of driving the pipeline to convert new business? Here are some scenarios:



Scenario 1: Medium Conversion, Low Value (\$1M) – Status Quo

Conversion Ratios	Aware	Engage	Propose	Consider	Convert	Value
	100	10	3	2	1	\$1M
	200	20	6	4	2	\$2M
	1,000	100	30	20	10	\$10M
	10,000	1000	300	200	100	\$100M

Scenario 2: Medium Conversion, High Value (\$5M) – Higher Value

Conversion Ratios	Aware	Engage	Propose	Consider	Convert	Value
	100	10	3	2	1	\$5M
	200	20	6	4	2	\$10M
	1,000	100	30	20	10	\$50M
	10,000	1000	300	200	100	\$500M

Now look at the same table when you have high conversion (2:1) and high value:

Scenario 3: High Conversion (2:1), High Value (\$5M) – Performance & Value

Conversion Ratios	Aware	Engage	Propose	Consider	Convert	Value
	100	10	4	3	2	\$10M
	200	20	8	6	4	\$40M
	1,000	100	40	30	20	\$100M
	10,000	1000	400	300	200	\$1,000M

In this example, for the same level of awareness and engagement, you get a higher proposal conversion ratio and could double your performance to that in Scenario 2. This is a critical calculation in understanding your go-to-market approach, strategy, and pipeline management, and ultimately your success.



BE AWARE: RESOURCE PRESERVATION

One business, at the beginning of all its sales pursuits engaged the legal team to review every single RFP, draft Agreement, SoW, sometimes taking days and having the effect of slowing the sales process down.

Even at best with conversion ratios at 50%, this means that half of the time, energy and activities undertaken by that department is of zero value. Imagine what this means if you use the same principle across your entire business.

Whether in legal, operations or other resources, a more focused approach will save resources and eliminate non-value effort, maximize value, and increase win rates that in turn can not only have a positive impact on growth and cashflow but on morale as well.



4.12 PARTNERSHIP PLAN

You have come a long way. We now start preparing how to turn all your hard work thus far into action. The Partnership Plan is the vehicle to help you and your team to do that. There are some specific steps to go through to bring a cohesive, comprehensive yet as concise as possible platform, with easy access for all the Partnership Team (including clients) to be able to establish not only what the plan is but engage, hold people accountable for their agreed elements of the plan, and track progress and achievement along the way.

“plan”

[plan]

A detailed proposal for doing or achieving something. An intention or decision about what one is going to do. Decide and arrange in advance. Design or make a plan of (something to be made or built).

Synonyms: *plan of action, master plan, game plan, proposal, intention, aim, intent, objective, goal, target, aspiration, ambition, organize, arrange, design.*



PARTNERSHIP PLAN

REMEMBER: Partnership is not a one-and-done exercise but rather a journey, and as the partnership progresses, the partnership plan will need to inevitably change as factors evolve over time.

Here are some of the suggested elements to include in your Partnership Plan.

DETERMINE OWNERSHIP OF THE PLAN

Identifying the ownership of the Partnership Plan is essential to the overall, long-term success of your journey. Starting from Executive Sponsorship to senior leadership to those directly responsible for execution, and those in support. It is also critical to ensure that this isn't just a one-sided initiative in a vacuum, it's absolutely critical to engage your partners and to have their buy-in and commitment too. All stakeholders need to have commitment to, and responsibility for the journey and aligned on the value of the desired outcomes. You will need from both parties the following roles:

- ✱ Executive Sponsors
- ✱ Senior Leadership: Responsible for driving the execution
- ✱ Operations: Responsible for delivering the execution and stated outcomes
- ✱ Support: Those functional and technical experts and resources needed

“Operations keeps the lights on, strategy provides a light at the end of the tunnel, but project management is the train engine that moves the organization forward.” – Joy Gumz

STATE THE PARTNERSHIP GOALS

The Partnership Plan needs to begin with the stated goals of the partnership or think about it in terms of an expedition. What is it you are hoping to achieve? Where are you going? What will it be like when you get there? What are the benefits to all on setting sail? What is the timeline? What does success look like? And the measurements of success?



VISION (EXAMPLE)

“Over the next three years, we will create a work experience, and build a culture that will be a flagship in the financial services industry to attract and retain the best talent. We will be recognized as one of the Great Place to Work in the United States and across our global footprint.”



MISSION (EXAMPLE)

- ✦ We will create a **WORK EXPERIENCE** that: attracts, inspires, excites, and energizes our employees, no matter where they are.
- ✦ We will continue to develop and focus the **BEST STRATEGIES** to achieve this by using modern, and contemporary design based on the needs and aspirations of our employees.
- ✦ With **SUSTAINABILITY** top of mind, our experience will be flexible, adaptable, energy efficient, and low maintenance.
- ✦ We will continue to leverage our **INDUSTRY INSIGHTS** to bring new products, technologies, and innovation to the proposition.
- ✦ **PRODUCTIVITY** is optimized because of the availability and proximity to amenities that are safe, efficient, and sustainable.

This is just one example of what might be a million. Each organization, each partnership is different, and by the very nature of the Partnership Plan, each must be unique and tailored to each individual case and situation – one size certainly does not fit all.

"You can't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore, sometimes for a very long time." – Andre Gide

4.13 BRIDGING THE GAP

Your Partnership Plan should also include the following elements. Take quality time with the key stakeholders complete the following details:

- ✳ **Understand Current State**
- ✳ **Identify Future Desired State**
- ✳ **Understand the Gap**
- ✳ **Develop the Bridge**
- ✳ **Set the Goals**
- ✳ **Quantify the Goals**
- ✳ **Identify the Resources Needed**
- ✳ **Create Action Plan and Accountability**



Figure 29.

Having identified the gaps through listening, learning, and understanding, you can then make the bridge through setting goals and creating clear definitions of accountability to create an action plan, apply the appropriate level of resources and measure the outcomes against the expected deliverables.

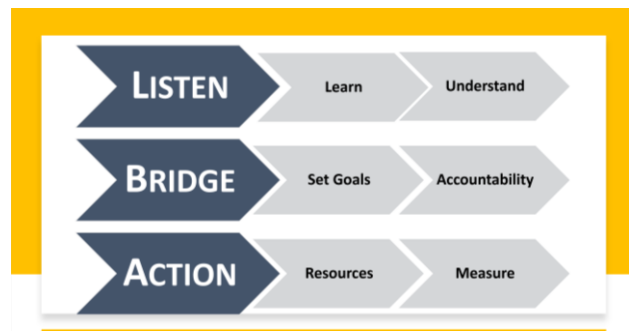


Figure 30.

"You can't talk about leadership without talking about responsibility and accountability - you can't separate the two. A leader must delegate responsibility and provide the freedom to make decisions, and then be held accountable for the results." - Buck Rodgers

4.14 PARTNERSHIP CHARTER

“charter”

[‘CHärdər]

A written grant by which an institution such as a company, college, or city is created, and its rights and privileges defined.

Synonyms: *authority, authorization, sanction, covenant, dispensation, consent.*

The ultimate Partnership Plan is a fully signed off, bought into Partnership Charter, no different to that of any of the great expeditions during the golden age of exploration – whether discovering Antarctica, landing on the moon, the next great horizon for humankind, or managing your business trajectory, the Partnership Charter is the ultimate and ideal goals.

For Sir. Alex Ferguson, and Manchester United, what would his Partnership Charter have looked like as he navigated his journey from the brink of removal to what became the most successful partnership in the history of football?



Figure 31.

"If you truly aspire to be literally on the same page with your most important clients, then the Strategic Partnership Charter is the way to get total alignment between your organizations, at the highest levels, and shared commitment to mutually aspired outcomes." – Simon Elliot



RE-CAP

PROGRESSING YOUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

There is much to do on your journey to Strategic Partnerships. The journey may be long and difficult at times but once you have everything in place and you have built a culture of ownership the rewards become self-evident – better retention, vertical growth, and better fit new business acquisition.

From establishing your methodology and process around driving innovation, attracting, and retaining the best available talent to your business, through Bullet Proof Operations and Client Satisfaction you are building loyalty and the momentum to sustained and profitable growth.

From establishing your preferred terms of business, your sales story, identifying and broadcasting to your audience.

Understanding Pipeline Management and using your Conversion Ratios as a tool of discovery as opposed to a name and shame.

Formulating your Account Plans, your Action Plans, driving results and progress, then creating your Strategic Partnership Charters to gain senior leadership commitment and buy-in to investing your way to a future together, where both parties can thrive as a result.

This is your first step on your journey, we hope that you have found this worthwhile, and we look forward to helping you and supporting you on the long and rewarding road to Strategic Partnership, and success.



USE-CASE

STRATEGIC ACCOUNT PORTFOLIO UPDATE.

It's been a while, 9 months in fact. The team had grasped the importance of the journey, we had been busy but it felt really good today, this was our annual leadership meeting and we were ready and prepared.

During this time, I had seen a big change in George and the team. Although previously they were doing a decent enough job, they had no radar to see beyond the day to day, and we had put a lot of time and effort in to get the tools up and running.

As opposed to George's usual modus operandi of presenting the teams results through reams of PowerPoint slides, today, they were presenting straight out of the CRM - now front and center of the operation, all the data, information and insights were being created from one depository, no more files gathering dust in drawers.

This was a proud moment for George, he was in control, and the CRM had all the answers, the reports, and the dashboards he needed to tell his story, a tale of progress and Strategic Partnership.



TRY THE TRUE NORTH EXERCISES



Go to the Workbook section of TRUE NORTH and follow these exercises. By the end of the work exercises you will have all the elements you need to build your own Strategic Partnership Playbook for your business portfolio.

- E.15** EXERCISE 15: PACKAGING YOUR PROPOSITION
- E.16** EXERCISE 16: 360 DEGREE REVIEW
- E.17** EXERCISE 17: IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUE
- E.18** EXERCISE 18: CREATE CLIENT COMPANY PROFILES
- E.19** EXERCISE 19: FLEXING THE PROJECTIONS, WHAT IF?
- E.20** EXERCISE 20: DRAFT YOUR IDEAL TERMS
- E.21** EXERCISE 21: CRAFT YOUR STORY
- E.22** EXERCISE 22: BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE
- E.23** EXERCISE 23: CRAFT YOUR PARTNERSHIP GOALS
- E.24** EXERCISE 24: COMPLETE YOUR PARTNERSHIP PLAN



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

“success”

[sək'ses]

The accomplishment of an aim or purpose.

Synonyms: *favorable outcome, successfulness, favorable result, successful outcome, positive result, victory, triumph.*

Navigating the labyrinth of Strategic Partnerships, just like any pioneering endeavor, it isn't easy but like every endeavor, if done properly, if taken one sure step in front of the other, then the outcomes are well worth it, and way beyond the level of investment.

No matter the size of your organization, calculate the effects of increasing retention by each 1%, increasing revenue through existing partnerships by the same, extending existing partnerships into new areas or services, winning more profitable, long-term, aligned partnerships. Each calculation will be different, each absolute monetary value will vary, but compared with the investment of better aligning, performing to and beyond expectations, the results and the benefits will be exponential and transformational.

It's a long-term commitment that shouldn't be taken lightly. It needs the buy-in of your senior stakeholders, all the way to the CEO. You will need to garner the support and engagement of your clients for optimum effect, understanding that it is them that will also ultimately benefit too.

Beyond this introduction, there are further steps that you can take to progress your strategic partnership approach, including such things as creating Partnership Advisory Boards to literally be at the same table together. Strategic Partnership and Sales Excellence Academies to train all your teams in the fundamentals. Consider Major Pursuit Process, a Business Game that allows you to understand the optimum approaches, strategies, and tactics for retaining and gaining major accounts.

Whatever your journey, I hope that TRUE NORTH has given you some useful insights, tips, and techniques on how to better assemble and align your resources in your pursuit of sustainable growth long into your personal, professional and organizations future.





GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Hopefully, you will find this glossary of terms useful as you navigate TRUE NORTH and your Strategic Partnership journey.

#

4-Box Partnership Review: Model for categorizing client accounts by triage prioritization: Growth, Leverage, Invest, or Watch.

4xi Global Consulting & Solutions: A consulting and solutions firm focused on the advancement and progress of its clients through growth leadership, coaching, and programs that make for better business.

5-Light Risk & Situational Analysis: A method of assessing risk from High (Red) to Optimum (Purple) and combined with a situational assessment based on acceptability and pride, 1 being low and 5 being high. adopted from the UK Military BIKINI Alert system.

A

Account: An Account is a current buyer of products or services.

Account Management: A process of developing and leveraging relationships that support the client's mission and mutual business objectives.

Account Plan: A documented and mutually agreed plan to bridge any existing gaps and address identified aspirations.

Account Planning: The process adopted to capture and analyze insights and the methodology used to establish the best course of action to achieve mutual goals and objectives.

Account Team: The designated team with assigned responsibilities, ownership, and accountability for the successful management of a designated Account or accounts.

Action Plan: Identifying the action required, the resources needed, the person responsible, accountability, and the timeline for each action to be complete. This is then used as a basis to check and confirm progress along the way.

Advisory Board: A selected group of individuals with the relevant experience and expertise to advise of a specific business or operation. Usually, 3rd Party individuals with no vested interest apart from the success of the project.

Alignment: The process of ensuring that the parties agree to the goals, objectives, strategies and tactics for a particular business, operation, or an Account.

Assumptions: A list of documented details used to create a plan. These might relate to resources available, certain conditions, or financial metrics assumed to build up a bigger picture.

At Risk: Accounts that are identified at risk of loss. These should be included on a regularly updated and published At-Risk Register.

Audience: The constituents in your eco-system that you wish to communicate with including employees, partners, contemporaries, clients, and prospects.

B

Be Aware: Factors to be mindful of around their existence and potential resultant consequences.

Beware: Factors to be conscious of that could represent a risk.

BIKINI Alert State: A measure of risk as used by the UK military and security forces.

Broadcast: The act of sharing your messaging with your audience. This could be advertising, social media, industry publications, thought leadership articles, BLOG's, or in the public media.

Business Case: The supporting evidence and evaluation to gain support from the floating of an idea or an initiative to be adopted as a business initiative.





Business Review: A formal review of business performance against pre-determined criteria and format. The Business Review should include past highlights, current performance, and future facing innovation, initiatives, and advancement.

C

Capabilities: The core of your main strengths and specifically as it relates to the products or services you provide as opposed to those you may aspire to in the future.

Coaching: An engagement or interaction whereby an appropriately qualified or experienced individual shares insights to another, or an organization how best to deal with a certain situation or set of circumstances.

Collaboration: The act of working with others to share ideas, thinking, approaches to collectively solve a challenge, business problem or to innovate a new way of doing things.

Cost of Doing Business: The allocated costs of doing business that don't necessarily show up in an Account Profit & Loss Statement. Might be associated with leadership or support resources, time, travel, cost.

Client: The buyer of your products or services. This could relate to an organization, or an individual or individuals who you answer to in the delivery of your products or services.

Client Profiling: The process of identifying client traits and grouping them into different categories. This might include Ideal Client Profiles and also less so desirable client profiles too.

Conversion Ratios: An important measurement of sales performance, tracking the number of opportunities as they progress through the Sales Pipeline from Awareness, Engagement, Proposal, Consideration to Conversion. This aspect also allows sales managers to understand not only conversion ratios but also to track the volume of opportunities required to meet growth targets.

CRM (Customer Relationship Management): The process but also the platform that you manage your client, prospect and your marketing and growth data.

Customer Satisfaction: Overall level of customer satisfaction of products and/or services provided as gathered by various means including solicited, un-solicited and open-source feedback.

D

Dashboard: A highly visual, highly accessible presentation of key data which is easy to consume and understand the performance of an activity, process, or business.

Discovery: The process that goes through the Listening, Learning, and Understanding to gather the evidence, the facts, the observations that lead to a conclusion how to best solve a business problem.

E

Even Keel: A calm and stable situation. The phrase alludes to a ship's keel, a supporting structure that helps to keep the ship stable in the water.

Execution: The process and actions of initiating an initiative from theory to reality. Often referred to in the context of operations.

F

Feedback: Information and insights derived from stakeholders on their experiences or observations on a person, a product, or a service.

Flex: The process of taking a set of known statistics, metrics or numbers and creating "What-if" scenarios.

Fresh Eyes: Whereby a new individual or team reviews an existing product or service to provide new perspectives around the customer journey, the experience, and provides feedback on what could be improved.





G

Governance: The agreed structure within which the parties will manage a relationship. This might include the rules of engagement, the parties involved, the set goals and objectives, the cadence and nature of measurements, meetings, and a definition of what mutual success looks like.

H

Health Barometer: An instrument to measure the health of a client or Account. This could be a combination of external measurements and internal but provides an empirical measurement of account health.

I

Influence Map: An exercise to analyze a group of stakeholders and their levels of authority, approval rating, powers of veto, financial power, and influence.

Insights: Information or knowledge that provides additional perspectives to better manage a situation.

J

K

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's): Metrics used to monitor, measure, and assess performance in line with set criteria, usually around hard metrics such as financials or compliance.

L

Leadership: Those with the Money, Authority, and the Need (MAN) to sponsor, support, and effect change in an organization.

Loyalty: An emotional connection or reason to maintain a relationship, continue business, based on positive experiences, a sense of belonging, a shared commitment or set of beliefs.

M

Major Pursuit: A retention or growth opportunity with either a large or a strategically important opportunity.

Measurement: The agreed empirical factors whereby success can be measured in an objective manner.

Metrics: Empirical points of measurement that provide specific, data-based indication of levels of performance.

Milestones: An agreed set of points in time linked to agreed actions along a longer journey. Used to track progress and monitor in line with overall objective and outcome timeline.

Mission: The shared objectives and desired outcomes of a partnership, and how you will get there.

N

O

Operational Excellence (OpX): Bullet Proof Operations being the foundation of retention and growth.

P

Partnership Charter: A formalized charter between client and service provider. This is signed off by leadership on both sides and contains the principles of doing business together, governance, and desired outcomes.

Partnership Plan: A documented plan that takes the current partnership from current state to desired future state.

Performance: The action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function.

Pipeline (or funnel): A tool to visually keep track on the sales activity of an organization and as the funnel narrows the opportunities progress from being: Aware, engaged, through Proposal, Consideration, and Conversion.



Portfolio: A group of businesses or clients, often managed from the purview of a collective as opposed to a group of individual accounts.

Post-Mortem: Analysis of the facts following an event such as a lost piece of business. Also, a good practice to complete after a successful retention or growth conversion.

Pre-Mortem: The process of mimicking a scenario before it happens to take it through to a conclusion and conduct a predictive review of what might happen into the future, therefore producing plans to change the future of the scenario or predicted outcome.

Problem Statement: The identification and definition of a pain point as a recognized issue that needs to be addressed.

Profit: Various references and terms including EBIT, PBIT derived from the net result of revenues minus operating costs to produce a Profit or a Loss.

Q

R

Relationship Management: Employing behaviors and best practices that ultimately create an environment of trust, openness, collaboration, co-operation, and ultimately mutual success and attainment of shared goals.

Relationship Networking: The act of developing relationships and rather than being passive, to be proactive and go out of one's way to actively invest in building relationships.

Retention: The opposite of losing account but keeping it.

Risk Assessment: Utilizing the 5-Light system, identifying the grading from Red, Amber, Black, Green, and Purple on the risk of a certain situation or circumstance from High-Risk (Red) to Optimum Position (Purple).

S

Satisfaction: The level by which a partner rates their level of experience with their expectation. Satisfaction is a lagging indicator and, in a moment, or time, and does not necessarily connect to loyalty.

Self-Realization: Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, also applied to a business or organization.

Self-Reflection: The act of inwardly scrutinizing one's own behaviors, performance, or achievements. Also, expanded to the self-reflection of a business unit, or an organization.

Situational Assessment: Utilizing the 5-Light system, identifying the grading on a 1-5 basis on the acceptability or pride rating of a certain situation or set of circumstances.

Scope of Work: A definition of the tasks to be completed.

Service Level Agreement: An agreed set of criteria of the services to be performed of the products to be provided.

Stack-Rank: The process of ranking several items or categories from top to bottom, as in a league system used in numerous sports.

Stakeholder: A person, group, or organization that has an interest in or is impacted by actions associated with a client or an Account.

Storytelling: The art of translating business situations or propositions into consumable and memorable stories.

Strategic Account Management: A set of methodologies and approach that impact mutual objective and focused on identified outcomes through a defined approach, methods, behaviors, and practices.

Strategy: An approach designed to achieve a certain set of long-term objectives supported by a set of short-term tactics.

Success: Defined criteria of what achievement of a certain goal or objective might be.





SWOT Analysis: A methodology to assess the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats as related to a specific project, situation, or an Account.

T

Talent: The right people with the right qualifications, experience, expertise, attitude, and aptitude needed to successfully complete a task or a series of tasks.

Terms of Business: The contractual and commercial terms within which you engage with your clients, partners, or suppliers.

Thought Leadership: Points of view and perspectives on a certain subject matter that take it beyond what is commonly known and understood but insights that provide additional perspectives and opportunities to educate.

Transformation: The act of moving from one state to another. From wet to dry, from seed to flower, from reactive to proactive, from one technology platform to another, from an old way of working to a new.

True North (also called geodetic north): is the direction along Earth's surface towards the geographic North Pole or True North Pole.

U

Underperforming: An Account that is not meeting the minimum expectations of performance.

V

Value Performance Indicators (VPI's): A set of metrics used to monitor, measure, and assess performance in line with set criteria around how the partnership drives value such as sustainability goals, diversity, philanthropy, and community.

Vision: The big picture stated objective of the shared aspiration as a result of the partnership.

W

Satisfaction: The level by which a partner rates their level of experience with their expectation. Satisfaction is a lagging indicator and, in a moment, or time, and does not necessarily connect to loyalty.

What-If Scenarios: Testing out theories or plans taking known data and flexing to understand the outcomes of differing scenarios.

X

Y

Z



INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING YOUR TRUE NORTH?

TRUE NORTH is a playbook for you to grasp the essence of the journey, but to implement you need to invest in your teams, your systems, and your approach. TRUE NORTH is available as a stand-alone read, however, if you are serious about making the journey to Strategic Partnership, here's some ways that you can embark upon that journey:

TRUE NORTH: The Playbook

TRUE NORTH: Introductory Workshop

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: Program

THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

The investment can vary depending upon the level of commitment to the transformation, the number of people you want to include and the frequency and timing of the program.

In addition to the TRUE NORTH program, also consider the following support opportunities:

- ✳ **Major Pursuit Business Games:** For large retention or new business opportunities.
- ✳ **Growth Leadership Coaching:** Optimizing your retention and growth team effectiveness.
- ✳ **Sales Excellence Academy:** A multi-year program to developing and excelling your growth.

4xi would be delighted to help you on your journey to Strategic Partnership. Contact us today to learn more:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Elliot originally from the United Kingdom joined Russell & Brand in operations at Harrogate Ladies College in 1994, then on to group operations at Yorkshire Water, then to another prestigious private school, Giggleswick, before moving into sales.

R&B were acquired by Marriott Management Services, then shortly after swallowed up by Gardner Merchant then in turn by French company Sodexo. He entered the Thameside International Sales Excellence Academy led by Phillip Cripps. This provided the grounding of professional growth and partnership principles that have guided his career to date.

International travel to six of the seven continents (Antarctica to go!), visits to Africa, Thailand, Morocco, Central, and South America were part of his education, as was more formally with the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM), and Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD).

Stints living overseas in Germany, Canada, Belize, Australia, and now calling home just across the Golden Gate bridge just outside of San Francisco, California.

Simon's business dealings have taken him across many sectors from Education to Business & Industry, from some of the most prestigious schools and colleges in the UK to 6th Form Colleges, Independent Schools, and Universities, to State Middle and Comprehensive Schools. From technology firms, to tank factories, to the largest copper mine in the world. From Nike to NATO, from Cisco Systems to eBay, from the Australian Airforce to the European Commission, from JP Morgan Chase & Co to Goldman Sachs, and Capital One. In the automotive world from BMW, Audi, and Mitsubishi in Europe, to Fiat Chrysler Automotive, General Motors, Ford, and Nissan in the US – it is these learnings that have raised Simon to the forefront of the future of work movement and to Chair of WORKTECH Academy North America, and Global Ambassador.

A career of leading teams, organizations in operations, technology development, sales, growth leadership, retention and strategic partnership strategy and execution.

Today, Simon is Managing Partner at 4xi Global Consulting & Solutions where with Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Barbara Boden, they have built a world class, global team with decades of experience establishing, nurturing, and building long-term mutually successful partnerships. The 4xi team has operated at a senior level within client-side corporations, service providers, in the areas of innovation and investment, and in multi-sectors throughout the world.



4xi Global Consulting & Solutions is a consulting and advisory firm offering solutions to corporations, service providers, innovators, and accelerators operating in and seeking to advance the world of work and work experience for employees, consumers, clients, and to change the work experience for GOOD. We offer consulting service, project management, on-demand-expertise, programs, and solutions through a carefully curated network of partnerships. Our strength is in the power of our collective. Inspiring the future of work, together.

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Inspiring the future, together.





WORKBOOK

TRUE NORTH PRACTICAL EXERCISES





TABLE OF CONTENTS

To take the principles of TRUE NORTH and facilitate turning the theory into practice, we have created a series of exercises for you to complete on your journey to strategic partnerships, instilling culture, driving behaviors, and building an approach that will result in better retention and better business.

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EXERCISE 1: PERFORMANCE VS. TRUST

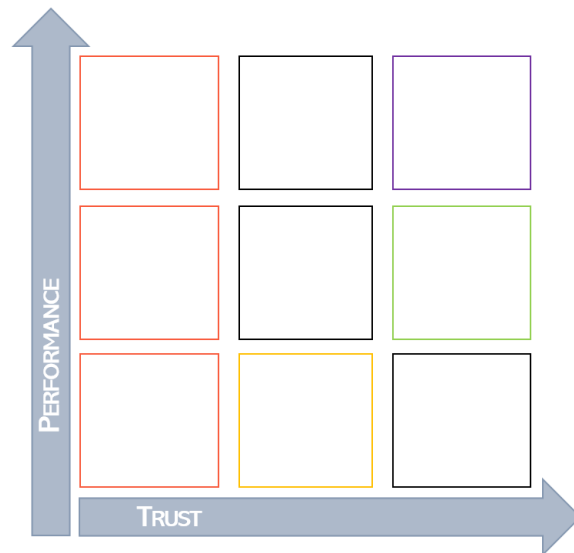
Trust is often a mutual thing. If one party doesn't trust the other, then often the same is true in reverse. Then if one party trusts the other then the same is more likely in return. It's the existence or absence of the fundamentals that makes the difference and they are often sensed by both parties.

Look at your own partnerships, whether your team, your suppliers, or your clients and plot each of them on the 9-box grid opposite and analyze the results. Be honest with your self-assessment.

Here are some categories of stakeholders you might want to focus this exercise on dependent on your role:

- ✱ Your team members
- ✱ Existing Accounts
- ✱ New business pursuits
- ✱ Suppliers
- ✱ Your network

Take some time and consider the landscape of where you stand today and how you can address any short fallings or leverage the strengths to drive Performance AND Trust.





EXERCISE 2: THE HIERARCHY OF TRUST

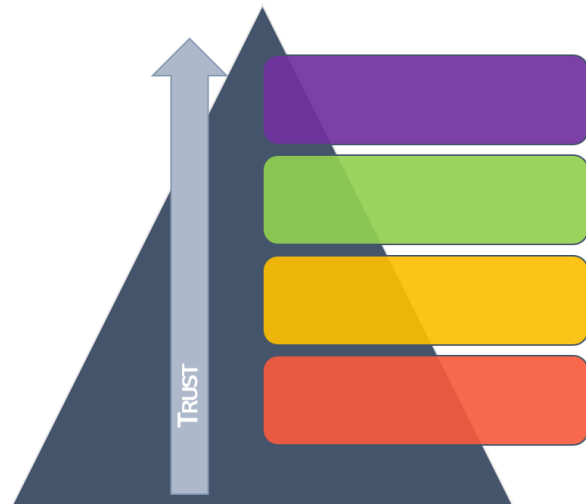
Looking at your existing partnerships assess which one of them falls in each of the categories:

- ✱ Strategic Partnership
- ✱ Partnership
- ✱ Transactional
- ✱ Commodity

Again, be brutally honest with yourself as this will give you the self-realization and insights to be able to build an action plan to move you from where you are today to where you aspire to be in the future.

Remember the categories of stakeholders you might want to focus this exercise on dependent on your role:

- ✱ Your team members
- ✱ Existing Accounts
- ✱ New business pursuits
- ✱ Suppliers
- ✱ Your network





EXERCISE 3: STACK RANK YOUR EXISTING PORTFOLIO

Look at your existing portfolio taking into consideration how you measure performance and success. This will not only give you insights into where there is good business and perhaps otherwise but also provide you with some important road signs of where and how you pursue future business resources and activity.

Think about including the following areas of assessment:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| ✱ Revenue | ✱ Contract Type | ✱ Industry |
| ✱ Profit | ✱ Geography | ✱ Relationship |

Once you have this data in one place and using the 5-Light Risk Assessment and Situation Analysis methodology you will be able to score your portfolio overall and stack rank it to see where your existing strengths exist, and otherwise, and start to give you clues on the Ideal Client Profile for the future.

Add the following criteria for more visibility:

- ✱ Marquee Account?
- ✱ Strategic Account?
- ✱ Overall value to your organization

It is important to remember that these three are not necessarily the same thing. What is big and shiny doesn't necessarily translate into being strategic, and neither of the above necessarily drive value to your organization.

This exercise can be completed by placing a weighted value in each column and creating a calculation that will automatically stack rank them based on the criteria and importance that you place on each factor.

Here are some questions that you should consider as you complete this exercise:

- ✱ Is the level of % profitability within an acceptable range for the enterprise?
- ✱ Is the cost of doing business with that account within an acceptable range?
- ✱ Does the industry/sector represent either core focus for the enterprise or growth opportunities?
- ✱ Is the industry/sector in decline, stagnant, stable, or in growth?
- ✱ Is the geographic location in an area of operating strength? Can you execute seamlessly?
- ✱ Is the geographic location a potential area for growth?
- ✱ What are the most attractive contract types for the business?
- ✱ How do you perform, achieve results by account, and what commonalities exist?
- ✱ What are the circumstances where you hold the best relationships, and how can these be replicated?

All these questions when applied will start to make it clearer to you about not only the strengths and weaknesses of your portfolio but start to give you clues about the conditions and types of partnerships you excel at those that you do less so.



EXISTING PORTFOLIO STACK RANKING

You will have your own criteria of measurement and success but included are some examples that might help you with this exercise.

Account	Location	Revenue	Profit (\$)	Profit (%)	Cost of Doing Business	Industry	Contract Type	Performance Rating	Relationship Rating	Results Rating	Marquis Account	Strategic Account	Desirability Rating	Overall Rating
Client 1														
Client 2														
Client 3														
Client 4														
Client 5														
Client 6														

For the purposes of this exercise, the 5-Light Risk & Situational Analysis methodology could be used as follows:





EXERCISE 4: 4-BOX REVIEW

Taking your Portfolio Profile, add an additional column and through the lenses in this diagram allocate each account into either Watch, Leverage, Invest, or Growth.

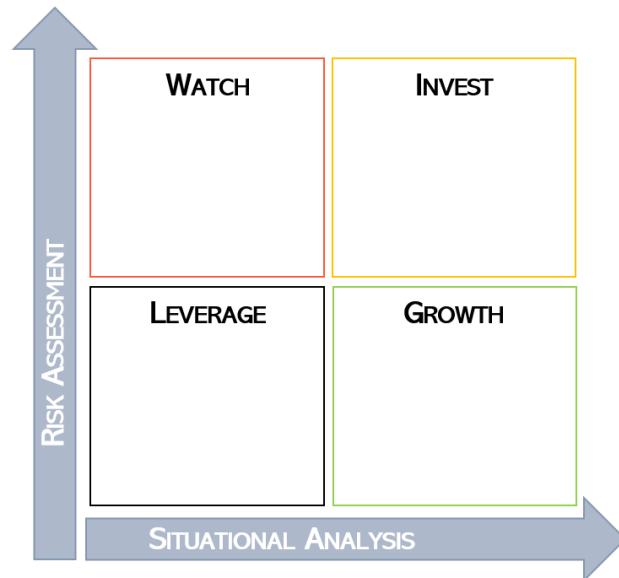
Each of these are determined by the Risk & Situational Analysis:

Where there is a poor relationship and poor financial results, then clearly there are issues, and these accounts probably need to be on your Watch List.

Where there are good relationships but poor financial performance, then it only takes the change of a client to bring potential disastrous consequences.

Similarly, where there are great financials and poor relationships. Then it's probably time to reinvest and build relationships.

Then, of the 4, the only good place to be is great relationships and great financial results, which could represent an opportunity for vertical growth – but remember, don't ever get too complacent.





EXERCISE 5: IDEAL CLIENT PROFILE

Taking your completed existing Portfolio Model, going through column by column, line by line, assess the attributes of a client, and an ideal client that would likely stimulate the best outcomes for your organizations, but also the client organization.

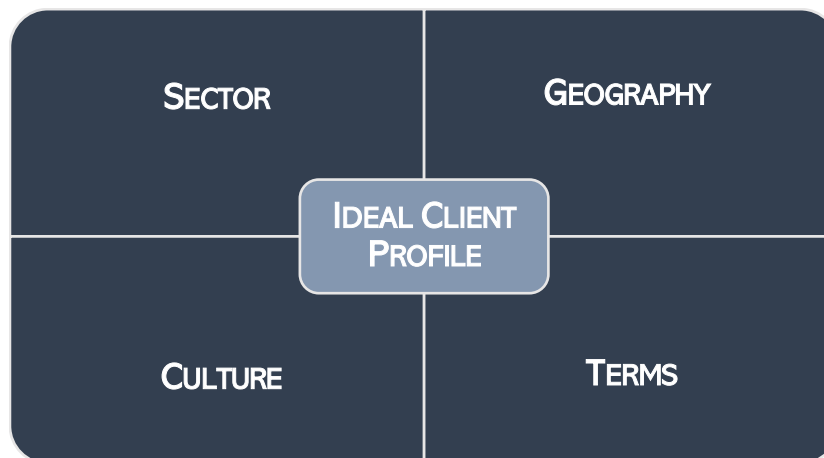
What type of client is the best fit? Who are they, what do they do, what are their philosophies, the needs, their aspirations, and where are the best matches?

This doesn't have to be a massive list, in fact I would encourage that it is not, just the best mutual fit for you and the client.

Here are some criteria and questions that you might want to ask as you are going through this exercise:

- ✱ What are the industries and sectors you are strongest in, and what are the adjacencies?
- ✱ Does the client organization have a need for your products or services?
- ✱ How much of a priority does the client place on the products or services you provide?
- ✱ Which organizations demonstrate the best cultural fit with your organization?
- ✱ Where are the best fit values such as cost vs. value, necessity vs. experience?
- ✱ How do your geographic footprints align, or not?
- ✱ To what extent does the client organizations approach to doing business align?

At this point, don't put actual client names in the boxes, that is the next stage of the process, this is your criteria for your Ideal Client Profile.





EXERCISE 6: SEARCHING THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE

Thinking about your own eco-system, how can you add value to your partners within it? The search for these golden nuggets will not only help them but by nature help, progress and advance your own path to success.

This is not a *“what can I get from them”*, this is *“what can I do to add value to people and the organizations in my network?”*

Consider the following questions as you go through this exercise:

- ✱ What can I do to help them excel?
- ✱ What change can I effect?
- ✱ What encouragement can I give?
- ✱ How can I add value?
- ✱ How can what I do make a difference?
- ✱ What are the benefits of partnership?
- ✱ What connections can I make?

This level of self-reflection can unearth often what is staring you right in the face, and one of your first steps to establishing strategic, mutually beneficial partnerships.





EXERCISE 7: CREATE YOUR COMPETITOR LANDSCAPE

Using the example included, define the criteria of comparison that is most important to you, your business and sector, this may include things like:

- ✱ Market Presence
- ✱ Reputation
- ✱ Portfolio Strength
- ✱ Financial Strength
- ✱ Ability Invest
- ✱ Performance
- ✱ Talent
- ✱ Product/Services
- ✱ Innovation

Then, once you have established the criteria, complete the exercise with the competitors. This might be company to company competitors, or by geography, or by individual pursuit.

Folks may say that they know the competition well already, but unless you have been through a comparative exercise like this before, then you probably don't know them or your place in the world as well as you need to.

	Competition	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3	Criteria 4	Criteria 5	Criteria 6	Overall Score
	Your Company							
	Competitor A							
	Competitor B							
	Competitor C							
	Competitor D							



Weakest

1

Lowest



Weak

2

Low



Even-Keel

3

Mid



Good

4

High



Best

5

Highest



EXERCISE 8: IDENTIFY YOUR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Create a stakeholder map of your eco-system and all those that are important to your business including:

- ✱ Clients
- ✱ Prospects
- ✱ Employees
- ✱ Shareholders
- ✱ Partners
- ✱ Vendors
- ✱ Industry consultants
- ✱ Competition

For each group work out what are the top 5 or 6 most important things to them.

This way you'll work out what the most important things for you should be, and what metrics you need to measure and what questions you need to ask of them.





EXERCISE 9: CREATE YOUR DATA MATRIX

Looking at your own business, and using some of the examples included, what are the right metrics for you to use as a baseline to measure your business. You will have many of these already but don't just stick to the obvious ones. The more data you track, the more meaningful information you will have into your business, and the greater level of insight to make impactful decisions.

Here's some examples of the things you might consider measuring:

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ✱ Business Revenue | ✱ Pipeline Conversion Ratios | ✱ Client History Timeline |
| ✱ Profitability | ✱ Industry Penetration | ✱ Performance Reviews |
| ✱ New Business (A) | ✱ Sales by Product/Service | ✱ Client Satisfaction |
| ✱ Lost Business (B) | ✱ Geographic Growth | ✱ Consumer Satisfaction |
| ✱ Net New (A-B) | ✱ Resource Ratio | ✱ Employee Satisfaction |
| ✱ Retained Business | ✱ Funnel Analysis | ✱ Employee Turnover Rate |

Then also include some of the Value Performance Indicators that might be strategically important to you but also your clients and prospects, consider data measurements that drive visibility, therefore focus and performance in areas such as:

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ✱ Sustainability | ✱ Diversity & Inclusion | ✱ Community Support |
| ✱ Local Spend | ✱ Philanthropy | ✱ Industry Rankings |

Combined, this will drive the measurements and therefore visibility to performance on the most important things that matter to you and your stakeholders, clients, and communities.

**EXERCISE 10: IDENTIFY SOURCES OF INSIGHTS AND INTELLIGENCE**

Memorialize the sources you or your organizations will utilize to gather insights and intelligence, and how you are going to share it and make it readily available to your teams.

Here's some examples:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| ✱ Company Reports | ✱ Business Journals | ✱ Industry Publications |
| ✱ Networks | ✱ Contacts | ✱ Your team |
| ✱ News Articles | ✱ News Alerts | ✱ LinkedIn |

Once you have identified your sources of information, put in place processes and channels that gather the information and share it as part of your business processes, consider platforms like:

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| ✱ Google Alerts | ✱ Hoovers | ✱ LinkedIn Sales Navigator |
| ✱ Internal Newsletters | ✱ CRM Sharing Apps | ✱ Slack |



EXERCISE 11: GATHERING FEEDBACK

Now you have established your stakeholders, what's important to them, the sources of measurement, then craft your questions, and the method in which you will gather the information. This is critical in ensuring that your efforts are hitting the mark, and that you can continually adjust and evolve according to the needs of your stakeholders,

Here are some examples of how to gather the information and feedback:

- ✱ Client Survey
- ✱ Employee Survey
- ✱ Partner Survey
- ✱ In-moment feedback
- ✱ Pulse Checks
- ✱ Internet Reputation
- ✱ Interviews
- ✱ Consumer Groups
- ✱ Verbatims

But you'll also need to develop a set of test questions that measure the things you've identified as important; this will give you the ability to track progress on a set of standard criteria over time. Some examples include:

- ✱ People
- ✱ Products/Services
- ✱ Performance
- ✱ Price
- ✱ Perception
- ✱ Partnership

EXAMPLE CLIENT PARTNERSHIP SURVEY

	To what extent do you believe that ABC understands your business? How important is this to you?	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
	To what extent does ABC have the right team to support your business? How important is this to you?	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
	To what extent does ABC perform to your expectations? How important is this to you?	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
	To what extent does ABC drive value to you and your business? How important is this to you?	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>
	To what extent would you recommend ABC to colleagues and friends? How important is this to you?	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>

KEY WORDS: Please provide up to 10 Key Words that describes your partnership experience with ABC Company?

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

NEED TO KNOW: Please provide the Top 3 Key Words that we should focus on?

1.
2.
3.

WHAT WE DO BEST: Please provide the Top 3 Key Words on our strengths?

1.
2.
3.

● Definitely No!
 ● Likely No
 ● Most Likely
 ● Yes!
 ● Absolutely, Yes!

1 = Not Important 5 = Highly Important

DATA VISIBILITY

Then once you have worked out the measurements and methods of gathering the feedback, then understanding how you collect, store, and make sense of the feedback is key.

It is the art of making the feedback visible, reacting to it and continuous improvement is the trick and will drive your business performance forward.

Consider creating dashboards from the data and sharing with your teams openly and as close to possible in real time to really keep a pulse on your overall business performance and client and consumer satisfaction.



EXERCISE 12: CREATE YOUR CLIENT INFLUENCE MAP

For each of your clients, create client influence maps including the entire sphere of influence. Later you will be able to add connectivity to your own team to establish wiring and relationships to optimize the partnership. As you are doing this, think about everyone's personal goals and wins, and how you can help them satisfy whatever agenda that they may have. Through color coding you can also assess the quality of each individual as it relates to them being a Coach, Advocate, Neutral, or a Detractor.

Think about the buying roles beyond their title. The following categories might help you:

- ✱ Leadership
- ✱ Financial
- ✱ Technical
- ✱ Procurement
- ✱ Client
- ✱ Super User
- ✱ User
- ✱ Consumer

Then you may also have Passive or Vocal Influencers that could play a positive or negative depending on where they are on the Detractor/Advocate scale.

Name	Role	Authority	Approval	Finance	Veto	Compliance	Negotiate	Influence
Name	Buying Role							
Name	Buying Role							
Name	Buying Role							
Name	Buying Role							
Name	Buying Role							
Name	Buying Role							

In this Application, you could use the 5-Light Risk Assessment and Situational Analysis as follows:





EXERCISE 13: CREATE YOUR PARTNERSHIP CONNECTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT MAP

Using the Client or Stakeholder Influence Map for a particular client or organization, match up the connectivity of your executive team with your client organization. Be sure to schedule a frequency of connectivity and a mechanism to confirm, feedback and follow up.

Client Side		Advocacy Rating	Company Side	
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title
Name	Title		Name	Title

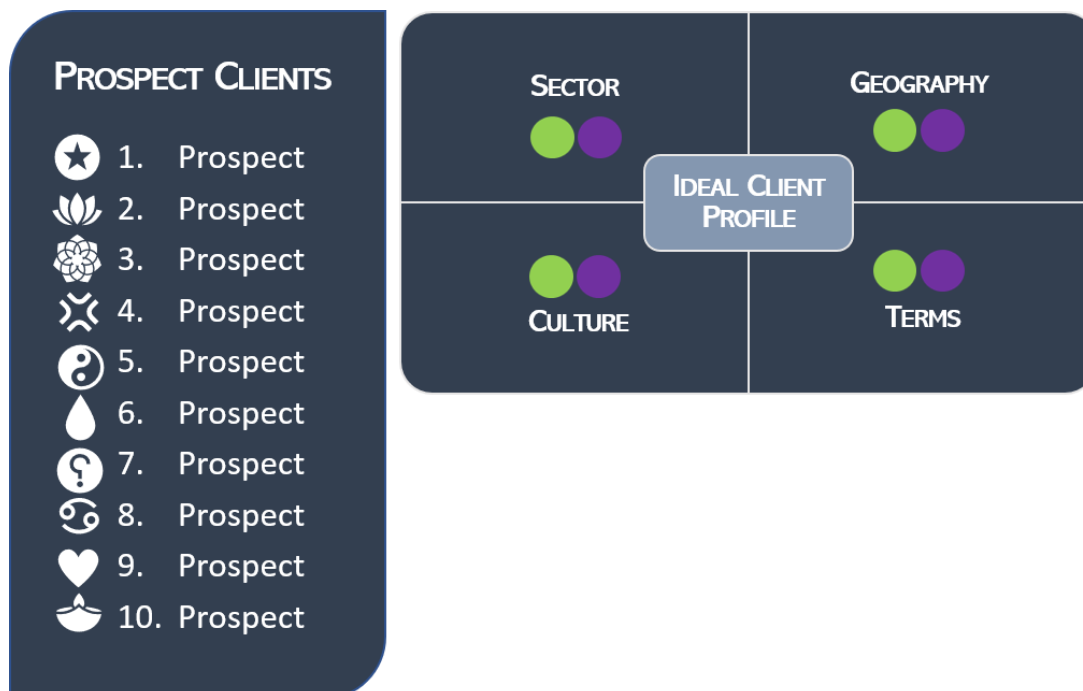
In this Application, you could use the 5-Light Risk Assessment and Situational Analysis as follows:





EXERCISE 14: CREATE YOUR TARGET ACCOUNTS LIST

Taking your Ideal Client Profile, sift through the market data and identify those prospect clients that meets your criteria. This doesn't need to be a long list, in fact probably shouldn't be. The number will vary from company to company from situation to situation but ultimately must be realistic and manageable.





EXERCISE 15: PACKAGING YOUR PROPOSITION

Take a Fresh Eyes look at your proposition, what you do, where you do it, who with. What is the value you derive and what is your customer experience journey look like? Look at the following questions and try and distill your answers into a one-page framework that will form the essence of your proposition in a concise, consumable, and easy to understand package:

- ✱ What is it that you do?
- ✱ Why is it important to your existing and potential partners?
- ✱ How does it work?
- ✱ What value does it derive to your partners?
- ✱ How does it make your partners feel?
- ✱ What does the customer experience feel like?
- ✱ How do you drive loyalty to your business?
- ✱ What does mutual success look like?

These questions and more will allow you to step back from your business and look through the eyes of all your partners. What's it like to work for you? Do business with you? For your suppliers? For your customers?



**EXERCISE 16: 360 DEGREE REVIEW**

Looking inwardly is an important exercise but don't stop there. Seek independent and honest insights from all your partners across your eco-system – everyone that you touch in the course of your business. Don't stop at your customers, or consumers, but your employees, suppliers, your vendors, your management, even your prospective clients and your competition.



EXERCISE 17: IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUE

Think about your products and services and because of using them, then what are the Gain to be had? Increase client customers, revenue, improving efficiency or something else? Then in terms of Pain, reducing risk? Improving reputation, controlling costs, or something else?

Again, ask your stakeholders, employees, partners for their input and feedback, and once you have gathered the groupings of how you add value, calculate what that means to the partner in terms of tangible value, for example:

- ✱ Increasing customers by 1% at an average spend of \$10,000 equals \$1M annually, or \$5M over 5 years
- ✱ Increasing revenues by 5% based on current revenues equals \$5M annually, or \$25M over 5 years
- ✱ Reducing labor turnover by 5% equals \$1.3M annually, or \$7.5M over 5 years

Then you could quantify a reduction on absenteeism, workers compensation claims, product defect rates, like for like cost savings (not quality reduction), and the list could go on.



EXERCISE 18: CREATE CLIENT COMPANY PROFILES

Taking this information from your research, create a one page only Client Profile for each of your partners including the research and findings from your research. When doing this for multiple clients, complete in the same format, or even better still in your CRM tool for multi-user access and single source of information for your business.

Here are some headings you should consider including:

- ✳ Client name, logo
- ✳ Joint timeline: Client history, your relationship
- ✳ Key achievements
- ✳ Products or Services you provide
- ✳ Financial Headlines
- ✳ Type and length of agreement and key terms
- ✳ Relationship assessment
- ✳ Client Connectivity Map
- ✳ Current key initiatives and next steps

**EXERCISE 19: FLEXING THE PROJECTIONS, WHAT IF?**

Taking your completed existing Portfolio Model, create new tabs for your scenarios.

- ✱ What if you were to increase sales by x% each year?
- ✱ Grow vertically and add additional services?
- ✱ Remove non-value effort and resource?
- ✱ Improve conversion ratios?
- ✱ Less time bidding, more time winning?
- ✱ Larger, better fit, more profitable clients?
- ✱ Improve retention?
- ✱ Increase your margin?

Remember, although there may well be the need to add resources, skills, expertise, even maybe acquire, your existing teams will be more efficient spending less time answering Requests for Proposals and more time focusing on targeted clients, building relationships, understanding client's real needs (and not just their procurement team's version), retaining, and winning more profitable business.

**EXERCISE 20: DRAFT YOUR IDEAL TERMS**

Although each industry is different, each contract is different, take your existing agreement, and then take two more client agreements that you like the terms of and are representative of client-side agreements - then compare them side by side, clause by clause. Through the lens of partnership and mutuality, choose your favored terms in each section to create your framework, a head of terms. Then go through this with the lens of working together, shared incentive, shared risk, alignment of goals.

Pass this to your legal counsel with the following remit:

- ✱ Draft an agreement that if you were on the other side you would agree without edits
- ✱ In Plain English so anyone can understand it
- ✱ Rather than using multiple words, use one when that will do
- ✱ Draft in as fewer pages as possible.



EXERCISE 21: CRAFT YOUR STORY

There are many different methods you can adopt including using an external agency, but before you do, try and craft the story internally, at least the framework. Here's a fun exercise that you can try with your team(s):

Take a set (or two) of Post-It Notes and jot down all the key selling points of your product, service or thing and brainstorm with your team, even better with your clients, even your consumers. Stick them up on the wall and consider them. Have a discussion around the why people wrote down what they did, merge duplicates together.

Think about the points in the paragraph above and group all the thoughts into similar buckets. Have another group discussion and use the Post-It's as the basis to tell a story – at this point don't worry how nonsensical, this will help you start to form a framework around possible storylines.

At that point, go on a break, go do some team building, something social, go out to dinner, reconvene the next day, and then task each of the groups to huddle and write a story on paper and present back to the team.

This will then form the basis of the palette to use on a blank canvass to craft the story – keep it to one page only, then test it out with an audience, internal stakeholders, clients, consumers, but never forgetting just like the best and greatest brands out there, it's an evolution.



EXERCISE 22: BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE

No matter which CRM you choose, its only as good as the data you put in it. As a starting point, take your existing data, and in a spreadsheet, apply the Filters so that you can clean up the data, update the information, fill in the blanks, dump the garbage. Then map into Columns that correlate with your CRM and upload. Once uploaded, then this becomes your foundation to building your audience. Look into email integrations to keep your data up to date, and put some rigor into your team's adoption, updates, and accuracy. Done correctly, your CRM will be a fundamental element of your business's communication engine.



EXERCISE 23: CRAFT YOUR PARTNERSHIP GOALS

In full collaboration with your client, start to craft your shared Vision and Mission Statement. There is no one right answer, every instance is different, but the most important factors are that you are on the same page, you have the right levels of sponsorship on each side, and you have the long-term commitment to see it through, and to avoid any potential short-term dilution – this is a long-term strategic initiative and requires the attention it deserves and unwavering commitment from all parties. Take your time, getting this right is fundamental to mutual success.

**EXERCISE 24: COMPLETE YOUR PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

Pulling all these elements together, complete your Partnership Plan draft, circulate with stakeholders, receive, and make adjustments, present as a team, final agreement, AND get sign-off from Executive Sponsors and Senior Leadership – it needs their physical signatures on these game changing documents and commitments to long-term and transformative change.



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