

Postscript: A Framework for Collaboration

The Collaboration Framework helped us refocus a relationship with a new supplier of a high potential new product where performance was not meeting the requirements of our key customers.

– Pete Koehn

Vice President, Global Operations, Imation

Overview

The Partnership Model should be used to structure relationships with key customers or suppliers where there is a history of working together and both sides view the relationship as having the potential for partnership. But, what should management do if these conditions are not met? To be successful, business-to-business relationships require that each side clarifies their expectations and mutually agree on goals for the relationship. In this chapter, we describe a framework that can be used to structure collaborative business relationships where the conditions for successfully using the partnership model have not been met. A new relationship with high potential or an important relationship to each side that is not a balanced relationship are examples where the framework for collaboration should be used.

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Introduction

The Partnership Model is a tool that can be used to structure an existing relationship between two organizations where management on both sides views the relationship as key. Because they have a history of working together, management is capable of scoring the drivers that can be addressed by the relationship. They are also able to jointly score the facilitators, that is, how well the two organizations will mesh. But this is not easily accomplished in a new business relationship where there is not a history of joint effort. Also, it may be difficult to bring the necessary levels of management together for a one and one-half day partnership meeting when one side does not view the relationship as important for corporate success as the other. However, all successful relationships require that the management team for each side clarify expectations for the relationship and then mutually set goals for the relationship. Once this has been accomplished, it is necessary to prioritize action items, assign responsibilities, establish timelines, and determine the metrics to define success. The next step is to document these action items and performance measures in a formal product and service agreement (PSA) so that the goals for the relationship are clear to all of those involved. The PSA specifies levels of performance, provides direction for joint improvement efforts and includes operational aspects of the relationships (the PSA is described in more