

Building Strategic Alliances and Collaborative Partnerships – The Northern Ireland Experience

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11 May 2017

Today we will...

- Consider the collaboration spectrum and the wide range of different types of collaborations that there are
- Explore why some partnerships and strategic alliances succeed and go on to make a real impact – and why some fail!
- The seven ingredients to successful collaborative working

My Background - CollaborationNI

- Legal Adviser CollaborationNI 2011 - 2017
- NICVA, CO3, Stellar Leadership, Building Change Trust
- Supported over 125 collaborations between voluntary, community, social enterprise and statutory organisations
- Forming alliances, building consortia, supporting mergers
- Act as independent 'honest broker'
- Collaboration of the willing for purpose

The Collaboration Spectrum

ALLIANCES	CONSORTIA & PARTNERSHIPS			MERGERS	
<p>Network Forum Alliance</p>	<p>Consortia Joint Bids Joint Projects</p>	<p>Sharing Support Services</p> <p>HR Finance IT</p>	<p>Sharing premises</p>	<p>Group Structure</p>	<p>Transfer of Undertaking</p> <p>Transfer to New Charity</p> <p>'Gift'</p>



LOW

IMPACT ON ORGANISATION

HIGH

Alliances

- Together For You
- Rare Diseases Partnership
- The Long-Term Conditions Alliance
- The Healthy Living Centres Alliance
- Greysteel Community Partnership
- Northern Ireland Alcohol and Drugs Alliance
- Newry Mourne and Down Strategic Stakeholder Alliance

Consortia

- Aspire Community Partnership
- Advice Sector Consortium
- Human Rights Partnership
- Women's Sector Consortium
- North Fermanagh Valley Partnership
- North West Advice Partnership

Mergers

- Fermanagh Community Transport
- Top of the Hill & Hillcrest House
- CDM Community Transport
- Early Years & Orana Family Centre
- Northern Ireland Theatre Association & Ulster Association of Youth Drama
- Newtownabbey & Antrim Citizens Advice

Seven Ingredients of Successful Partnership Working

1. Buy-In

- Have all the partners bought into the project?
- Funder-driven collaborations
- Anger, suspicion & resistance to change
- Need to feel listened to
- Find a way through the woods
- What is in it for me?
- What is in it for my beneficiaries?

2. Agreed Vision

- What is your partnership trying to achieve?
- Strategic interests to work together in partnership – or response to a crisis
- Fear and anxiety – is there a secret agenda?
- Is there a shared goal?
- What precisely is the problem that collaboration is the answer to?
- Paint a picture of what this new future will look like
- Is everyone bought into achieving it?

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather the wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



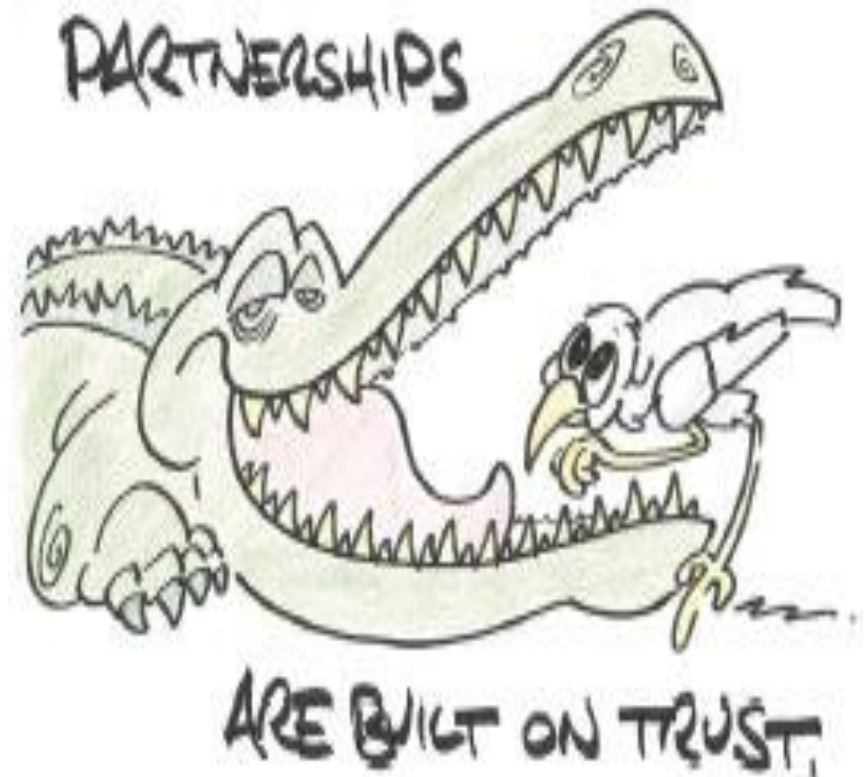
3. Find the Right Partner



- Dating! Spend time and money and energy getting to know each other – but still might not work out!
- Work with people you actually like!
- Needs to be a good cultural fit
- Are all the key organisations are in the room?
- For a merger, it is even more important that you find the right partner
- If it's not working, walk away!

4. Trust

- Tricky issue of trust
- Openness & transparency
- Reliability
- The 'principle of no surprises'
- Trust takes time to develop
- But can be lost in a moment!



5. Leadership

- Organisations do not collaborate – people do
- Collaborative leader – takes advice, empathetic, communicates, negotiates, seeks consensus
- Invests in the long-term relationship
- Avoids the temptation to win short-term, short-sighted victories

6. Negotiation

- Deal with the difficult issues early
- Politeness is the enemy of collaboration
- Listen – and understand the other person's perspective
- Focus on what is in it for you – or what is in it for your beneficiaries
- Give yourself space to negotiate
- Consider your red lines
- Find a win-win
- You will need to be resilient – and patient
- Be creative – be innovative – be solution focussed!

17 Camels

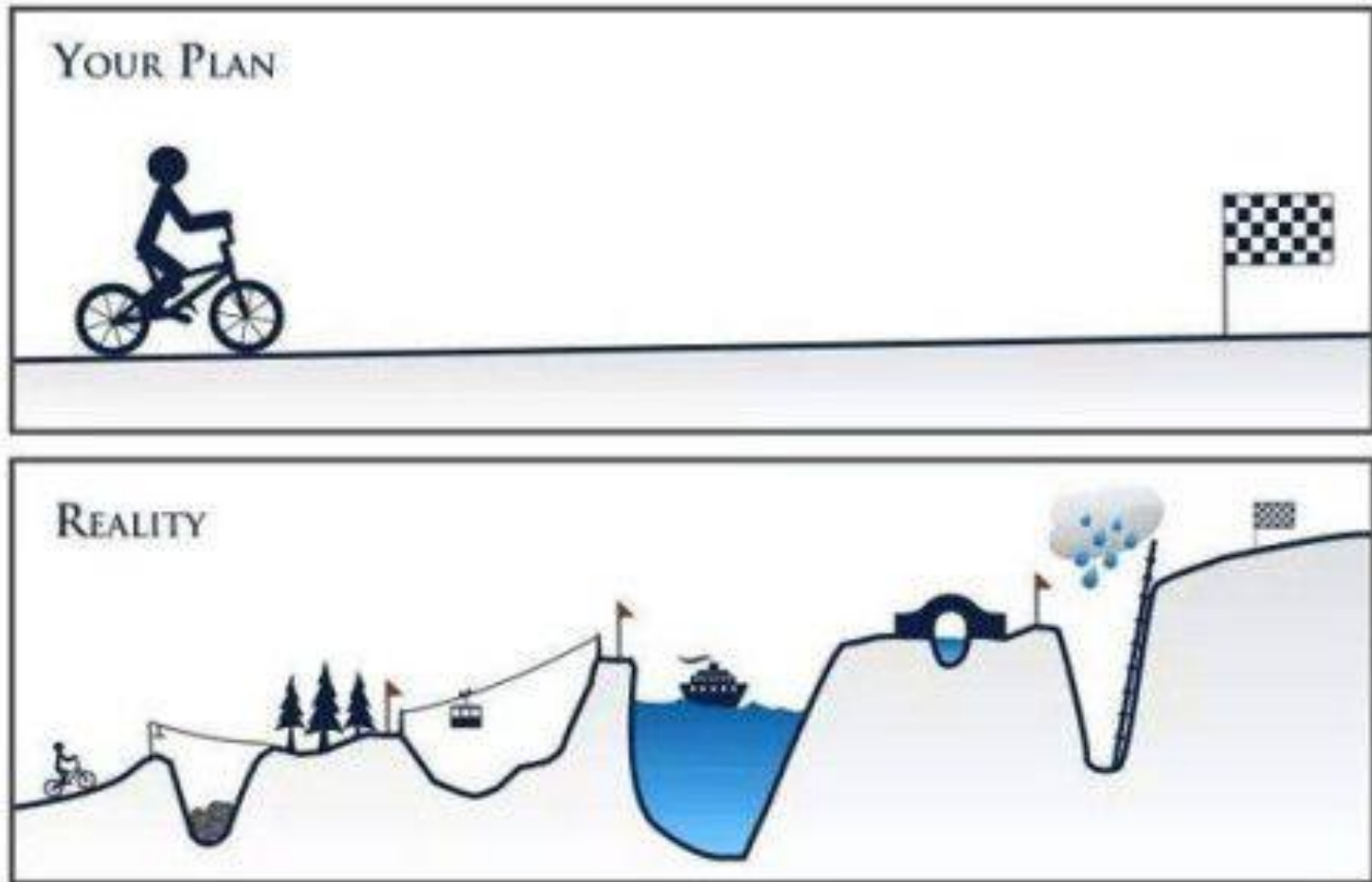
- Eldest son – inherits half
- Middle son – inherits one third
- Youngest son – inherits one-ninth



7. Agree a Good Process

- Establish a steering group
- Bring in independent support – an independent honest broker
- Put good governance around your new partnership
- Written agreement

Your plan & reality ...



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