

# 5 Ways to Have a Successful B2B Partnership

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Thanks to Valentine's Day, February always makes me think of relationships -- personal relationships, my family relationships and even my business relationships. As a social entrepreneur, I truly believe in the power of partnerships -- when we work together we are able to create something bigger than ourselves and thus, impact change on a much larger scale.

Just like any important relationship in your life, a B2B partnership takes time to grow and not all of them end on a successful note. Before you embark on a partnership with another brand or organization, keep these 5 things in mind:

## **Enhance Your Client Experience**

I read this great idea from [ClickZ](#): Draw a box. Inside the box, write the type of product or service your brand currently offers. Around all four sides, write the types of services or products your customers would typically use in association with yours --either before, during or after use.

For example, my company offers professional eco-friendly cleaning services for both residential and commercial clients. My residential customers may be looking for interior design and/or organizational solutions and my commercial clients may be looking for companies that provide building repair services. The goal is to find companies that provide products or services that not only make your customers' lives easier, but enhance your current offerings -- not compete with them.

## **Share Values**

You don't necessarily have to share the same products or services (matter of fact, I recommend you don't -- see point #1), but you do need to share the same core values. Aligning your values will help you make smart decisions that support the bigger vision. And, you'll never be left wondering if a decision was made based on ulterior motives.

## **Be Authentic**

As a social entrepreneur who specializes in eco-friendly solutions, I can't say enough about authenticity. Be up front with the goals you have for this partnership and make sure you fully-understand your partner's goals as well. Be specific about what each of you is bringing to table and what you expect from one another.

## **Build Trust**

Trust is the foundation on which all good relationships are built. Successful partnerships are created when both parties do what they say they will do, admit when they've made a mistake, volunteer information and show loyalty. If you're not feeling this is happening, you need to dissolve the partnership.

## **Start Small**

You don't necessarily have to create a big project in order to collaborate. Smaller projects have limited risk and are a great way to "test the waters" to make sure that your core missions and values align.

As more and more companies shift from being exclusively profit-driven to being companies who make a profit while also providing social benefits (thank you, [B Corporations](#)), B2B partnerships will become a vital part of the fabric of brands big and small. Taking the time to cultivate these important business relationships will have a positive effect on your bottom line and your social cause.

*This blogger graduated from Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses program. Goldman Sachs is a partner of the What Is Working: Small Businesses section.*

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