

# The Seven Core Competencies for Partnering™ Sue Dyer

Partnering has been a goal for many teams for almost two decades. Whether for a specific project, a strategic initiative or an alliance, partnering has proven to be a great way to expand the pie for everyone involved. Having facilitated *Partnering* for over 1,000 teams, we know it is not easy to achieve. Too often the attempt falls short of the desired outcomes. When partnering fails, many times it is because the team leaders and team members didn't know how to make it succeed. To help remedy this, we have identified the Seven Core Competencies for making partnering succeed.

## Competency #1: Leadership - Be a Trusted Leader

This competency refers to the ability to effectively lead a team to the successful completion of its objectives.

A *leader* by definition is someone who has *followers*. Following is 100% voluntary. Team members decide to follow the leader because they TRUST that the leader will help the team to succeed. The more trusted you are as the "leader" of your team, the better you will be able to share a compelling vision for success. Because they trust you, they will work to help you fulfill that vision. Fear and trust can not coexist. As the leader, you must drive out fear (even small pockets of fear) within your team. Fear will always prevent you from becoming the *trusted leader*.

## Competency #2: Negotiation - Be a Non-Adversarial Negotiator

This competency refers to the capacity to negotiate fair, justifiable agreements.

As a team you are *interdependent*. Because of this you need the cooperation of the others on your team in order to succeed. The old traditional *adversarial* way of negotiating, where you argue your points and there is an

There is a lot of energy in conflicts. If we dive into the conflict and really examine it, we can begin to see the root cause(s). Then we can take that same energy and begin to develop a strategy and commitments to resolve the root issue.

## Competency #4: Communication - Foster a Forum for Communication

This competency refers to the aptitude to create an atmosphere that allows team members to openly communicate so that understanding can be attained.

When team members trust each other to tell the "truth", no matter what - then a *dialogue* can take place. This is where you are willing to listen to your teammates with an empathetic ear, really trying to understand what they are telling you, without judgement. Then, in turn, you are willing to tell them truthfully, from your perspective, how you see things. Seeing the same issue from different perspectives is when real communication has occurred.

## Competency #5: Facilitation - Trust in the Collective Wisdom of Your Team

This competency refers to the capability to facilitate identification of the core problem/issue and to allow the team to co-create the solution.

Every team faces its challenges and problems. It's not the number or magnitude of the problems that determines if the team succeeds or fails. It is how the team comes together to resolve the problems that determines success or failure. This usually takes someone helping to

ultimate winner and loser, *just cannot work* when you are interdependent. You either win together or lose together - nothing else is possible. A non-adversarial negotiator seeks fair, justifiable solutions. These are the underpinnings of building trust within your team.

## Competency #3: Conflict Management - Use Conflicts for Constructive Change

This competency refers to the skill of transforming conflict into a productive force for change.

Most of us judge conflict as being "bad". Many, many people are conflict adverse, and as such avoid conflicts. This often allows conflicts to go on for some time without resolution. Most conflicts help us to see where something is not working as we need it to.



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facilitate conversations, a dialogue or assuring the right people are in the right place at the right time. When a team is focused on, and perhaps enjoying, the challenges that it faces, it begins to tap into the collective wisdom of the team. From there it begins to co-create great ideas and solutions.

### **Competency #6: Interpersonal Relations – Create Synergies**

This competency refers to the facility to understand yourself and others so that you can build a strong, cohesive team focused on expanding the pie.

People are motivated by their own self interests. Sometimes this means that some team members are actually working against the goals of the team. This causes entropy. Entropy can be depicted mathematically as  $1+1 = -2$ . Entropy means that some of the resources you are putting into your project are not moving you toward success. It is critical to understand your team members and to get everyone focused on and moving toward common goals. This allows for synergies to be developed. Synergy can be depicted mathematically as  $1+1 = 3$ .

## **The Seven Core Competencies for Partnering™**

- **Leadership**  
*Be a Trusted Leader*
- **Negotiation**  
*Be a Non-Adversarial Negotiator*
- **Conflict Management**  
*Use Conflicts for Constructive Change*
- **Communication**  
*Foster a Forum for Communication*
- **Facilitation**  
*Trust in the Collective Wisdom of Your Team*
- **Interpersonal Relations**  
*Create Synergies*
- **Organization**  
*Be Structured for Success*

### **Competency #7: Organization – Be Structured for Success**

This competency refers to the expertise to create processes, procedures and policies that bring the right people together, in the right way, allowing them to unleash their talents for the good of the overall effort.

Policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities all must be in place, understood and congruent with partnering and the goals of your team. Misaligned policies often frustrate team members into complacency. Poorly run meetings waste time and energy. Lack of a clearly charted course prevents the team from knowing where it is and what is of highest priority. The inability to set priorities and assure they are followed through upon wastes time. A structure should “enable” the team to achieve their objectives. It prevents bottlenecks and allows for a coordinated effort by each team member toward the good of the whole team.

*The Seven Core Competencies for Partnering* can help you chart a course for learning to consistently make partnering work for you and your team. Seek out training, coaches and mentors who can help. Assess where you are for each of the seven competencies. In which are you the strongest, and can perhaps mentor others? Where are your weaknesses? Set some goals to improve in those areas where you have the greatest need. Partnering has proven to be the most valuable risk management tool we have for assuring that projects and initiatives succeed. Building your “partnering muscles” is an effort worth undertaking.

*Sue Dyer is the founder and president of the International Partnering Institute, a non-profit educational organization that offers certifications in professional partnering facilitation and partnering competencies. Sue is also president of OrgMetrics, a consulting firm specializing in partnering facilitation and non-adversarial approaches to resolving disputes. To find out more, please contact Sue at [suedyer@orgmet.com](mailto:suedyer@orgmet.com) or 925 449-8300. You can visit us on the web at [www.partneringinstitute.com](http://www.partneringinstitute.com) and [www.orgmet.com](http://www.orgmet.com)*



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