

Two heads better than one?

Learn how to collaborate successfully...

personality and the other was more amiable and analytical. The driver simply couldn't accept that the partner was more relaxed towards everything in the business, which created conflict.

These are all soft issues affecting the culture of the business, communication channels and your approach to management.

A united front and successful relationship starts with realising why you are partnering, and making sure it's for the right reasons. Did you get together because one of you has technical skills, while the other is more sales oriented? It might be worthwhile looking for someone who has strong financial management skills – an important factor when building a sustainable business. Did you go into business simply to make lots of money? Remember, money is really a by-product of doing everything else well. Or did you partner because you wanted someone to hold the fort while you're on leave? Surely not the right reason?

Successful partnerships are built on:

Trusting each other. Being able to trust each other is essential. But you must also have systems in place to measure and verify performance, results, etc. Outputs and targets should be clear. There should be clear guidelines in place as to how decisions will be made, and what decisions can be taken without involving the other partner.

Sharing values and goals. Be aware that these can work for and against you. You must also be willing to share in any successes and failures.

Putting structures in place. Formal monthly meetings where all aspects of the business are discussed are essential. You may also want to consider weekly check-in sessions where you assess what is and what isn't working. A key challenge in partnerships is that there can be too many grey areas where structures are not set, and responsibilities aren't named. If you assume your partner is

responsible for a specific task, and they think you are, it could slip through the cracks. Detail all structures and strategies and put them down on paper.

Relaxing together. Take the time to interact in a more relaxed environment. I've only ever known one partnership that did this and it's been a highly successful relationship, which has carried through into their management of employees and the business in general.

Understanding their personalities. Make an effort to understand your partner's personality. Do your personalities compliment each other, or are your partner's traits like a red rag to a bull for you?

Personality profiles

Here are four personality types; most of us are a combination of two. Do you recognise yourself? And your partners?

- **Analytical**

These people focus on facts more than feelings. They evaluate situations objectively and gather lots of data before making a decision. They prefer organised work environments where they know exactly what is expected of them. Words that describe them include serious, well-organised, systematic, logical, factual and reserved.

- **Drivers**

These people know where they want to go and how they are going to get there. They are good at managing tasks and are result-oriented. Drivers like competition; particularly if they win. Words that describe them include decisive, independent, efficient, intense, deliberate and achieving

- **Amiable**

"Amiables" are responsive and friendly, but not necessarily forceful or direct. Words that describe them include co-operative, friendly, supportive, patient and relaxed.

- **Expressive**

These people are outgoing and persuasive. They are enthusiastic, friendly and prefer to work with other people. "Expressives" thrive when they are in the spotlight. Words that describe them include outgoing, enthusiastic, persuasive, humorous, gregarious and lively.

Why partnerships last

Partnerships endure for many reasons. You may, for instance, want to avoid upsetting the status quo, rely heavily on each

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other or just have a good way of dealing with conflict or disagreements. To ensure the relationship prospers make sure your responsibilities are totally under control.

Keep an eye on the goals and benchmarks you've set along the way. Is the business achieving these? Or do you think you could achieve more if you went off on your own?

Entrepreneurship can be frustrating and stressful, but you have flexibility and it should be rewarding. Make sure that this is what your partnership is giving you. **YB**

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South Africa has one of the highest divorce rates in the world; nearly 50% of all marriages end in separation. And business partnerships have a similar fall-out rate. If you want to be the exception to this rule, read on to find out how to collaborate successfully.

Why partner? Two or more of you may have developed the concept or product and taken it forward, you could have brought a partner on board to increase the amount of available capital for your start-up or, perhaps, being aware of your own shortcomings, you approached someone with the necessary competencies to take your idea forward.

There are now two or more people responsible for the success or failure of the business and this is where the problems may start. People being people, you are unlikely to agree on everything...

Some food for thought:

- If you hold less than a 50% share in the business, what real say do you have?
- Trust will become an issue if you don't discuss everything. In a firm that I worked with, one of the partners took two more weeks leave than the other partner without discussing it. This resulted in conflict and a break-down in trust.
- In another business, the one partner was a driver/controller

Guy Daines

Dressed for success

Just as a warm coat helps people function at their best in tough, cold weather, so government initiatives like Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment help businesses to thrive in difficult economic conditions. We embrace this era of empowerment – and the accelerated economic growth that it brings.

