



# Partnership Agreements

## Quick Reference Guide

### The Fundamentals

What is Partnering? We define it as anytime you join or associate with another (or others) toward a common purpose.

Successful partnerships are dependent on relationships that are authentic and trustworthy. Through consistently honest and open dialogue, effective partners develop relationships that are based on mutual respect, optimism, personal responsibility, and the cultivation of commitments. The relationship is reciprocal, in that there is input and feedback from both parties and equal ownership for outcomes.

Equal ownership can only flourish when clarity exists on the partnership's common purpose, which we also refer to as the stake. Another way to define stake is to answer the question, what is the purpose of our relationship? When partners are aligned on their shared purpose, they do not necessarily agree on the route of the journey, but they do agree on the destination. Collective Resonance is a state that describes an emotional charge, or the intersection of what is important to both of us related to our work together. Once partners are clear about common purpose and the intent of the partnership, they can agree on how they will interact with each other to create the best possible outcomes.

### Guiding Principles:

- Adopt a system view: the whole is more than the sum of the parts.
- All voices must be heard to get an accurate view.
- It is wise to seek information even when it is unpopular or marginalized.
- Nobody gets to be wrong, and everyone is right but only partially.

### Guiding Principles (continued):

- Healthy conflict becomes an opportunity to learn and be creative
- Cultivate mutually beneficial, and reciprocal relationships
- Support respectful and caring relationships
- Power is exercised in ways that empower vs. disempower

### Core Values

The relationship with our clients is not something we take lightly. Even when we have long-term relationships, we recognize the importance of regularly visiting common purpose, collective business priorities, and granting the relationship the power to do our best every day for the sake of maximizing business potential.

The relationship must be founded on a set of strong, mutually held core values.

### Core Skills

- Caring and Connection
- Commitment
- Respect
- Genuine Curiosity
- Valuing Others' Perspectives
- Collaboration
- Fun

Successful relationship contracting is driven by believing that trust is built by making and keeping commitments. We call our commitments, Partnership Agreements.

Even in the best relationships there can be challenges. Behaviors that can damage a partner relationship are referred to as Toxins. We commit to minimize toxic behaviors.

*“Although we live in an information technology age, we often find ourselves in failure to communicate situations.”*

Johnny Tan

## Partnering Toxins or The Four Horsemen

There are four behaviors that are so destructive to relationships that John Gottman PhD, famed relationship researcher and author of several books on relationships, refers to them as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. These four behaviors are:

5. **Blame or Criticism**—Attacking the person rather than the behavior.
6. **Defensiveness**—It is understandable that you would defend yourself when criticized, however, research shows that this approach rarely works. This is because defensiveness is really another way of blaming.
7. **Contempt**—Includes sarcasm, belittling, cynicism, name calling, and hostile humor.
8. **Stonewalling**—Includes cutting off communication, silent treatment, refusal to engage, withdrawal.

If you recognize some of your own behaviors here, do not panic!

Most people demonstrate these from time to time without much ill effect, it is when they are consistently present that it becomes destructive to relationships.

## Tips for Managing the Toxins

The four toxic behaviors manifest from a disempowered mindset. This means when someone feels they do not have control over a situation they may choose to blame another or become defensive. A disempowered mindset can occur when someone is triggered. There are many strategies to steady oneself and return to an empowered state.

1. **Awareness triggered state**—sometimes catching the shift in one’s mindset by noticing negative thoughts, feeling, and physiological response is enough to shake it off.
2. **Problem solving**—looking for a solution moves one from feeling stuck to evaluating possibilities.
3. **Evoking purpose and values**—calling on one’s higher self or purpose put the focus on something more important than ego.
4. **Designing Partnership Agreements**—preparing ahead by developing a communication strategy is another way to minimize triggering events by gaining confidence in the positive intentions of a partner.



## Design Partnership Agreements

### How do I prepare?

- Consider the primary purpose of the partnership.
- Which of the business objectives are important to you? Which of your values do they align with?
- What are your business priorities or key focus areas in the short-term?
- How do you add value to your partner?
- Identify a successful partnership that you want to emulate. What about the relationship worked?
- What negative partnering experiences have you encountered? How will you avoid these pitfalls?
- Identify the partnering characteristics that will support you in giving the best you have to offer.
- Be prepared to describe the importance of the characteristic. Think of examples of when it was present so you can talk specifically about that experience.

### How do I get started?

The following steps will help you agree to a partnership code of conduct, which we refer to as *Designing Partnership Agreements*.

1. **Goals: Identify your partnership's stake or shared purpose.** This is about crystallizing the intent and purpose of the unique partnership. This includes finding the reason for being in the relationship. By finding what is important individually and collectively, the purpose becomes what fuels the partnership. We refer to this as the stake, and the place we can return to when the going gets tough. It is the heart of the partnership.

Example: *What is most important to us is open communication and that we keep our commitments.*

2. **Roles: Discuss what it means to be in a partnership from both perspectives.** This is a conversation that encompasses what role each partner will play and what they expect from the other. This also includes uncovering assumptions and bias based on past experiences.

Example: *This means that I can tap into your operational strengths, and you can tap into my tendency toward creative brainstorming. We also will want to be attune to our differences creating friction.*

3. **Rules: Collectively define and commit to a relationship built on trust.** This is a deeper level conversation that includes specific behaviors and activities that will support building a productive and trusting relationship. Topics include important characteristics that support the partnerships shared purpose (direct, honest, respectful communication) and a plan for recovering when the partnership gets off track.

Example: *Honesty is important to me. That means telling me the truth and my commitment is not to get defensive.*

# Partnership Agreements

Partner Name:

Partner Name:

Department:

Department:

## GOALS

- Consider the primary purpose of your work relationship.
- Which business objectives are most important to each of you?
- What values drive your need to succeed?
- How will you measure success?

We have agreed on the following goals and objectives as the focus for this relationship.

1.
2.
3.

## ROLES

- How do we each add value in support of our collective goals?
- Discuss the best/most challenging partnerships in which you have been engaged.
- What specific role will you each commit to?
- Review and discuss SLAs.

Defined Roles:

  
  

## RULES

- Identify and list the attributes/behaviors you will practice to build a strong relationship.

We have discussed the protocols by which we will work together, develop, and in that same spirit of partnership, collaborate on our shared goals. In order to ensure that our relationship is a mutually rewarding and satisfying experience for both of us, we agree to:

1. Meet regularly. Our specific schedule of contact and meetings (including additional partner agreement review meetings) is as follows:
2. Maintain confidentiality of our relationship. Confidentiality for us means:
3. Honor the ground rules we have developed for the relationship. Our ground rules will be:
4. Provide regular feedback to each other and evaluate progress. We will accomplish this by:
5. In the event one of us believes our relationship is not productive, we will revisit our agreements and make necessary adjustments. As a last resort, we may decide to seek outside intervention to get the relationship back on track.

Partner signature and date

Partner signature and date