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WHITE PAPER

Synergy and Synchronicity

by Robert Porter Lynch 2013

Synergy and Synchronicity

One of the deepest desires of any normal human being is to be harmonized, synchronized and unified with others, as brother, sister, husband, wife, father, mother, neighbor, or friend. It is this common unity that underpins marriage, family, teamwork, community, alliances, nations, and the world of humankind. Yet it remains our most thwarted and elusive goal.

The “Quest for Synergy” is, at the same time, mankind’s highest aspiration, loftiest ideal, and most soulful yearning. “Synergy” is the elusive but alluring song of all teams and alliances. Its archetypal attraction is bound in its possibility of creating something more the sum of its parts. Synergy captivates all, escapes most, briefly visits some, and for the blessed few, bestows enormous wealth and success.

What then is the magic of synergy? Or is it magic at all? The quest of every team or leader is to find this holy grail -- the formula or architecture that will manifest this gallant goddess with singular regularity; to unveil synergy’s secrets like Edison’s applications of the power of electricity or the Wright brothers manifesting man’s ability to fly.

The Illusion -- What’s Missing?

Not understanding the essential nature of synergy results in comments like these:

“We know how to create alliances, but don’t know how to manage them!” reflected one American top executive, who lamented the lack of success in achieving his alliance’s primary goals.

“Government needs cooperation and coordination if we are to be efficient. However, we never seem to get alignment between the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments. Sometimes we get in bitter entanglements. It doesn’t look very good when the press gets hold of it,” was the complaint of a deputy minister in a Canadian province.

“Our internal teamwork is terrible. We can’t get any cross-functional group to work. People seem to build internal walls between our departments,” grouched a senior



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executive who watched his company polarize in the face of increasing competition and customer demands.

“It looked great on paper, but it was a terrible fit in reality. Our cultures clashed on every issue from decision-making processes to rewarding our sales force;” stated a dejected alliance manager in the pharmaceutical industry.

“During negotiations, the deal-makers poisoned the well, and we haven’t yet recovered. We had to undo all the damage caused by the adversary legal jargon;” was the battle-weary response of the president of a multi-billion-dollar international joint venture.

“Alliances are an unnatural act for us. They are extremely difficult to manage; we’d prefer to do acquisitions; that way we can control them,” complained a senior vice president of a large German chemical manufacturer. Later, he noted that 30% of his revenues and nearly 50% of his division’s profits came from alliances, but “we spend only 5% of our management time on them.” For some inexplicable reason he failed to allocate management resources to the highest profit generator in his business.

“Our acquisitions are largely a failure. We’ve bought very successful companies, but soon afterward the best of all the newly acquired people drift off into other jobs. Then the real problems begin...customers are lost, profits decline, innovation wanes....” was the sad comment of a chief financial officer.

In today’s interrelated world, organizational relationships have become complex and often confusing. Fundamentally, executives, managers, and civil servants who’ve been managing in traditional hierarchical command and control companies are befuddled when given an assignment that requires them to develop relationships outside their span of control.

The synergy they seek from the alliance remains elusive; cultural differences become insurmountable obstacles; project management turns into problem management; and the bureaucracies of the two parent organizations can become a quagmire of politics.

Secrets of Synergy

Not every complex organizational relationship experiences these impasses.

“I am amazed how well our two companies are working together. We are actually ahead of schedule, and have had relatively few difficulties;” was the delighted comment from the alliance manager of a strategic sourcing venture consisting of a European food service company and a Canadian partner.

“After only 6 weeks of working together, it’s hard to tell the difference between the employees of their company and ours;” explained the director of an international mining company, commenting on his joint venture with an electronics firm.

“I’ve forged alliances internally with our different departments and locations, with our work force, with our suppliers, and with our best customers. It’s enabled us to put new programs into place rapidly. Our sales and profits have increased over 150%,” was the proud statement of a Canadian manufacturer.

These collaborative managers achieved success because they insisted that their joint teams spend ample time understanding the unique aspects of strategic relationships, building cross-cultural teamwork, and establishing processes and skills to access and embrace the unique value of their joint vision and their partner’s unique strength.

Strategic Alliances: Creating Synergy & Synchronicity by Robert Porter Lynch
Experience has proven that there are invaluable, but often overlooked beliefs and skills that enable collaborative managers to produce high performance results: skills at managing differences, breakthroughs, speed, and transformation.

The Value of Differences

The fundamental reason why teams or alliances are formed is to access a capability within other people, groups, or organizations, thus finding the magical synergy, the 1+1=3. However, this means capturing the value of differences.

Lying within these inherent differences is the promise of the new team to create bold new futures, or conversely, to implode upon itself as differences turn destructive. Unfortunately, for all too many organizations, differences become corrosive, actions become angry, self-protection arises from distrust, and polarization rigidifies points of view. Some people turn to lawyers to generate reams of legal documents that create surrogate contractual trust. Others stand their ground more firmly, often with dire consequences – liberals versus conservatives, Protestants versus Catholics, Muslims versus Jews, capitalism versus communism, blacks versus whites – and the list goes on. Seemingly, the difficulty in managing differences is a relationship problem has gone on since the beginning of recorded time. The Bible is filled with these conflicts, Chinese history records similar conflicts, and even the wisdom of Socrates and Plato did not diminish the carnage.

Traditional approaches to managing cultural differences have focused on becoming sensitive to differences, cross-cultural training, understanding linguistic nuances, and acculturation. While these methods have their worth, a number of very essential approaches that distinguish successful organizational relationships are often overlooked (each element will be explored in detail in the following pages):

- [Power of Shared Vision](#)
- [Synergy of Compatible Differences](#)
- [Trust Building](#)
- [Commitment to Mutual Benefit & Camaraderie](#)
- [Sharing Expands Possibilities](#)
- [Conflict Transcendence](#)
- [Turning Breakdowns into Breakthroughs](#)
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The Power of Shared Vision

The universal vitality of focusing on a powerful common vision, backed up by a dynamic and inspiring value proposition that speaks to the customer shows no cultural boundaries. For example, take this typical vision for a government:

“We will be the leaders in (energy management, or education, or transportation, or public service, etc.).”

It presents a “vision vacuum” by saying nothing, containing no commitments, and inspiring neither the organization’s stakeholders nor its customers nor its suppliers. Devoid of a powerful vision, everything defaults to politics, manifesting as cultural differences, which then divide the stakeholders against themselves.

As the old adage from Alice in Wonderland states: *“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”* And that road will be fraught with in-fighting, subversion, despair, and confusion, all of which will ultimately lead to the ruin of the alliance.

Contrast the weakness of a faulty vision with the motivational force of a more commanding perspective:

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“Our team will create 10 new innovations each year that will reduce the costs to our customers by 25%, while accelerating their throughput by 50%.”

By having a powerful central vision and value proposition such as this, partners focus differences on how to achieve the joint goal, rather than arguing amongst themselves as to whose way is the “right way.” A shared vision helps ensure synchronicity. All powerful visions are founded on belief in the ability to discover the unknown, accomplish the seemingly impossible, and overcome the apparently unattainable.

Therefore, strong leadership must be present to build such a vision and to unify and align the team’s differences for a common purpose.

Synergy of Compatible Differences

Synergy does not just occur as a natural by-product of a relationship nor from a tough legal agreement, nor by dint of a dream.

Rather, it must be designed with architectural aplomb. Even more, synergy must be activated by a powerful set of actions founded upon the understanding of how differentials produce the 1+1=3 effect.

“If two people in the same room think alike, one is unnecessary;”
commented the philosopher, Ernest Holmes.

The eminent psychologist Carl Gustav Jung foresaw the potential of relationships when he said: “The greater the contrast, the greater the potential. Great energy only comes from a correspondingly great tension between opposites.” Joel Barker, in his groundbreaking work on paradigms, recognized that new paradigms originate from outsiders who think differently, not from insiders who see their world from an old and tired perspective. Each of these men understood the profound impact differences can have on the co-creation of bold new futures.

Invariably, however, ethnocentric or business culture attempts to enforce its mighty and frequently destructive hand. Some team members may begin by making judgments regarding the other side’s culture, branding it as strange, wrong, inefficient, bad, or unproductive. As soon as this begins, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and distrust begin to fester, and then the alliance begins to unravel. This calls for strong action.

Adept alliance leader and relationship managers, leveraging the vision for the alliance, will call for creating a “synergy of compatible differences” in which differences are respected as source of innovation, cherished for their ability to break paradigms, and expected to produce creative solutions. The manager’s ability to create this new “super-ordinate” culture enables the relationship to produce at higher performance levels than individual partners can achieve alone.

Because complex organizational relationships cannot be commanded, the mechanisms for leadership and control are dramatically different compared with most conventional hierarchies. Great relationship managers tend to be “integrators,” possessing outstanding skills in bridging differences through their ability to translate across cultural boundaries. The greater the differential between cultures, the greater the need for highly skilled integrators.

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Often the effective integrator will develop principles and values for the alliance that forge unity of vision and purpose. Integrators empower those around them by recognizing that “people support what they help create.” Thus, they use techniques to unify rather than divide alliance members, to bring out the best in others.

Trust Building

Ask any alliance manager about the value of trust in a relationship, and they will wax eloquently about its impact on success. Without trust, strategic relationships fail, period. Trust is the foundation of all cooperative enterprise.

Trust is the hallmark of the personal relationships between people who constitute the team. Without this trust, no legal agreement, no strategy, no structure, and no process can achieve its objectives. These personal trusting relationships distinguish great team leaders from their transactional cousins who bring the *Fool's Golden Rule* into relationships:

“He who has the Gold: Rules.”

The best strategic relationships tend to use three “metallic” rules:

Golden Rule: *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*

Silver Rule: *"At least do for yourself what you would do for others."*

Iron Rule: *"Don't do for others what they can do for themselves."*

Trust is the glue that binds personal relationships and the grease that prevents frictional differences from becoming fractious.

Trust and Integrity are the threads of the complex relational fabric. Integrity is more than just being honest or trustworthy. Integrity means being true to oneself, to one's deepest values; and the benefits are ultimately both a divine blessing and a liberating freedom.

“Integrity resides in the ability to constitute yourself as your word. As such it is a home, an anchor, a self-generated and continuing commitment to honor your word -- despite contrary thoughts and feelings if need be. It is a consistency of being, speaking and acting that shapes who you are -- to yourself and to others.” -- Anonymous

Integrity becomes a divine gift by enabling us to touch the deepest yearnings of others around us, thus creating a new set of possibilities filled with hope and inspiration. Integrity is thus expansive, allowing us to become more than ourselves, to create with others, to empower others. Integrity includes setting expectations and consistently meeting them. Integrity marvelously liberates us to live our relationships forward into the future, enabling us to experience the present moment cleanly and without fear that our past will undermine us, corrode our vision, and erode our energy.

The lack of integrity inevitably forces one to look back over one's shoulder, haunted by a past filled with historic baggage which will harbor tomorrow's illness, or threaten to destroy one's false illusions that were invented to disguise the sordid realities of a disingenuous life.

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In a fast-moving world, trust and integrity thus spawn a massive competitive advantage, because together they enable teams to make rapid decisions without the need for a legal contract every time someone tries to make a decision. What's more, trust and integrity enhance creativity, build teamwork, reduce unnecessary transactional costs (such as memos to protect oneself), and make the relationship more fun, thereby building human energy.

Trust can be elusive; ultimately, no number of pages in a legal contract can substitute for or replace weak trust. It's the single most important thing that separates alliances that thrive from those that fizzle. Trust enables everything to move faster, more effortlessly, and with less conflict. Mistrust causes everything to be more complicated, slower, and far more fragmented. In spite of its importance, trust is too often taken for granted.

The alliance professional who can build a strong relationship of trust creates enormous economic value. Our economic studies have shown consistently that trust can double the rate of innovation, accelerate speed of implementation by two or three times, and cut non-value-added work in half, or more. The economics of trust are compelling, especially considering that it costs little or nothing to create trust, while it is excruciatingly expensive to co-exist without it.

Why is trust so seductively elusive? Because there has been no clear "architecture" or "system" for trust, it has fallen into a vague and ambiguous area where the mind-set for trust is fuzzy; the skill-set deficient; and the tool-set inadequate. Alliance professionals need not be trapped this way.

Because trust has been an interdisciplinary target caught between academia's cracks, zig-zagging the boundaries of leadership, political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology, organizational behavior, and neuroscience, no concrete "trust architecture" has emerged. We aim to change that.

This has left us lost in a multitude of platitudes, slogans, and aphorisms, such as "trust but be sure to bring your lawyer," "trust but verify," "trust must be earned," "be skeptical before you trust," "be sure to have an exit strategy," and so on. Unfortunately, none of these approaches really produce any trust. [the UBC course will provide this "architecture of trust" in a compelling way.]

Because fear is the principal cause of distrust, leaders should be very hesitant to use fear as a means of motivation – its short-term gains may be very limiting in the long run. While fear causes people to withdraw, withhold, undermine, and generate suspicion, trust does just the opposite, being both the grease that makes things work fluidly, and the glue that binds.

Embedding a system of trust into your alliance yields enormous rewards for all stakeholders. Trust unleashes latent human energy and enables it to be aligned on a common purpose. Many leadership situations require influencing without authority, which can only happen when those we wish to influence trust and value us. Trust produces highly effective people, high performance teams, useful ideas and innovations, and people who want to come to work because it is an energizing, co-creative experience. Leaders who want to support collaboration, be considered trustworthy, and trigger innovation should keep the "FARTHEST" principles in mind:

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- **Fairness** in all your dealings to ensure that everyone gets a fair shake. Successful innovation leaders are perceived as being even handed, good listeners, and balanced in their approach.
- **Accountable** for your actions. When you make a mistake, admit it and move on. Accountability is the external manifestation of internal Integrity. Leaders without integrity are quickly dismissed as hypocrites.
- **Respect** for others is critical--especially for those with differences in skillsets and points of view. Without respect, trust cannot be built. Giving respect is the first step in gaining trust – then moving forward to synergize differences in thinking.
- **Truth** is an absolutely essential component of building the type of trust that triggers innovation. Remember, your emotions or perceptions are seldom real truths. Stick to the facts – things that are measurable or concrete. And remember, a critical comment has about five times the impact of a positive comment. So balance your truths carefully.
- **Honorable purpose** must be the foundation of all your actions. If people perceive your purpose for innovating as strictly selfish, without a component affecting the ‘greater good,’ you will not be perceived as trustworthy.
- **Ethics & excellence** in standards. Innovation is propelled by the idea of continual improvement, of reaching for the highest level of performance. If anyone sloughs off, they must realign to the highest measures, otherwise others will be resentful or fall off in their performance.
- **Safety & security** are essential to all human beings. This includes ensuring that there is “No such thing as Failure, Only Learning.” Be careful not to punish what might look like a failed attempt at creative solutions; encourage learning from failure. And always avoid the Blame Game. Fear does not produce innovation. You will know when people feel safe – they will be laughing. Creativity is not all grinding labor; it’s also about having fun and laughing, spontaneously creating in the moment – that’s magical. Research shows that laughter releases endorphins that trigger creativity.
- **Transparency & openness** enable everyone to see intentions, share data, and exchange ideas in a culture that develops new insights by supporting the challenging of ideas.

As a leader, you will be in situations where you must influence others over whom you have absolutely no authority. At this critical juncture, the NUMBER ONE thing that will come into play is the issue of TRUST. No successful influence will happen without TRUST playing the pivotal role. That means how others decide to support you, to align with you, to provide financial resources to you, and to help you be successful. Remember how important it is that people trust not just your dream, not just your word, and not just your actions, but also the *honorable purpose* for which you stand and your ability to build a team that you and they can trust. This team will grow into a world you can trust, while excluding those who don’t meet the standards of trustworthiness.

Synchronicity

Anyone who has traveled to Switzerland will notice immediately that Swiss churches are different from churches in many other lands. What’s different? A clock is imbedded in every steeple. Why? To keep the culture synchronized. The importance of synchronicity is that it enables coordination, encourages cooperation, and stimulates co-creation.

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According to historical precedents, Switzerland should never exist; a country made up of German, French, and Italian cultures would ordinarily tear itself up. While not the sole reason, synchronicity contributes enormously to its synergy.

The Swiss are meticulously prompt and on time. In business meetings, the rule is: 2 minutes early – 30 seconds late – that’s the window for a meeting to start. Outside that window, you are disrespectful.

Commitment , Mutual Benefit, & Camaraderie

Building trust in a relationship comes not from golf games and dining together. It’s built in the heart, and on the field of deeds; it’s held in the commitment to transform values and beliefs into concrete actions, it’s founded on commitment to adhere to one’s word.

Trust and Integrity are but hollow concepts until vigorous commitments are put into place. For it is with commitment we transform promise into reality by words that reflect intentions, and actions which speak louder than words. Commitment is making the time when there is none; the daily triumph of vision over skepticism, of conviction over fear, of cohesiveness in the face of adversity.

Commitment is the willingness to take risks, even when past experience calls for caution. Commitment is crossing the chasm of fear and danger to meet the needs and hopes of your partner. Commitment is the willingness to look from the past into future possibilities; the willingness to release anger and hurt in order to rise to a higher level, seeking to turn breakdowns into breakthroughs. Commitment is the power to transform the reality of relationships. Commitment is the willingness to take the leap of faith when there is little justifying evidence, because one believes in the other's values and integrity.

Relationship leaders always remark that they are accused of being traitors to own organizations when they stand tall and strong for their alliance partners. Brian Ferrar, alliance champion at HP-Compaq recognizes how this bonding impacts the relationship between champions:

“An alliance manager and his counterpart at the partner company are often closer than each may be to many of their co-workers because of the trust it takes to form the alliance.”

However, this bonding across organizational boundaries can be quite disconcerting to many insiders who see this as a serious breach of loyalty. It is from this loyalty, commitment, and integrity that relationship managers build a camaraderie that lasts for years.

Win-Win is the oft-trumpeted rallying call for teams and alliances. But win-win can mean very different things to different people. Consider the striking difference between these statements, all of which represent win-win:

~ SYNCHRONICITY EXAMPLE ~

Baseball’s Famed Double Play

Infielders executing a “double play” is a perfect example of synergy and synchronicity. All players have the same shared vision and guiding principles, innate trust in their teammates, commitment to precision of execution, and very clear roles and responsibilities.

Timing is essential. A split second spent to “think about the play” is enough to ensure failure.

Without deep trust in the other players’ competence, understanding the big picture, and cherishing different skills, the double play cannot be executed.

Every sport – hockey, basketball, football, soccer – has its parallel example.

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WEAK
Win-Win

I will fight to win, and you must fight to win, and somewhere in the middle we will strike a balance

I must protect my interests, and, inasmuch as they are protected, you can take what is left or what is in your interests

We must both be willing to strike compromises and make concessions if we are to achieve win-win

I will let you win because I know win-win is good for alliances

I am committed to you winning as long as you are committed to me winning

We both have a common goal, so we should work together to achieve the goal together

I will defend your interests from an attack or an infringement from people on my own team because you are my partner and my ally and because we have established firm Rules of Engagement which I will not let my own side violate – I am committed to retaining our trust.

We augment each other's strengths and weaknesses, therefore together we are greater than we are apart

Our Vision is the same, Our Values are Compatible, We Know and Value the Metrics of your "win," Let's Create a Breakthrough Together

STRONG
Win-Win

We will create a whole new world together with an inspired vision of the future that expands our potential, and enables the Customer win too.

For synergy to manifest itself, the strategic relationship must be championed by people willing to make strong commitments to a powerful win-win.

Sharing Expands Possibilities

For a moment, consider the interconnection between synergy and sharing. Synergy's goal is to attain the 1+1=3 proposition. The only way to attain such gain is through co-creative sharing. Alliances are built on the fundamental premise that sharing of risks and resources will expand the possibilities and rewards available to all.

Sadly, in a world where certain resources may have been scarce, hoarding is a common practice, based on the belief that hoarding will control resources, thereby maximizing returns.

One must distinguish between *expendable* resources that disappear upon sale or consumption (such as oil, food, minerals, etc) and *expandable* resources that multiply the more they are used (such as creativity, cooperation, and teamwork). *Expendable* resources are depleted upon usage. *Expandable* resources regenerate and increase when used.

For example, software is an *expandable* resource. Using it daily does not diminish its size or impact. To the contrary, using software creates more value every time it is used -- therefore it expands. It is best used when shared, transferred and transmitted. Using this resource brings it to life. Capturing the learning and sharing the knowledge generated by

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software only makes it more valuable, reaching more people, and generating more future possibilities.

Unlike expendables, which adhere to the universal price laws of supply and demand, expandables are not limited by supply, and demand does not increase their price, but does increase their value.

We must be able to distinguish between expendables and expandables when negotiating any strategic relationship. To treat each with the same principles limits possibilities of expanding the realm of the partnership. This type of thinking is often reflected in contracts for intellectual property, where negotiators tussle for months and even years over ownership rights. Their hoarding mentality blocks them from realizing that, if sharing of intellectual property rights occurred, both sides would create more new ideas and command a better mutual competitive advantage.

The economic Laws of Expendables run counter to the Laws of Expandables, but both are true and both mutually exist in our world. The problem is that miserly minds can't acknowledge the latter.

Accessing the expansive possibility of sharing begins with the mutual belief that "the more you give, the more you're going to get." When both partners hold this belief, it manifests. The general rule for the Law of Expandables is:

Sharing Expands, Hoarding Contracts

Roy Rogers, commenting on his long marriage to Dale Evans, remarked that a great marriage is not a 50-50 arrangement. Both partners have to give at least 100%. Rogers said both Dale and he were always willing to go beyond: giving 120%. The Law of Expandables creates its own "regenerative energy," this is what we call "synergy."

Ask yourself the question: "What kind of relationship will emerge if sharing is not a fundamental value?" If the answer is filled with fear, distrust, or uncommitted action, the relationship will bear shrunken and shriveled fruit.

Conflict Transcendence

Whenever disagreement arises (and it will, for wherever there is change, there will be disagreement and conflict), great alliance practitioners are careful to focus on ideas and issues, steering clear of ego entrapment games, such as "who's right or wrong," or "what's good or bad" that will rapidly descend into the pits of defensive self-righteousness and intractable conflict.

Conflict is the inevitable by-product of all change, and any proposition of new ideas will generate some amount of conflict. The objective is to prevent the conflict from degenerating into blind fear and inflexible rigidity. Without conflict there will probably be no buy-in. Just be careful not to take conflict as a personal attack -- conflict is just a tool to get people talking and debating an issue from one side or another. It promotes the kind of understanding necessary to be successful in the creativity business.

Most organizational relationships exist in a world of constant flux, and therefore need frequent and continual adjustment. If those responsible for the alliance use win-lose negotiating techniques, always angling for self-interested advantage, then each side will lose synergy potential. But worse, this approach

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will then generate conflict, which will soon become unmanageable as trust and commitment rapidly evaporate in an inflamed atmosphere of fear and protection.

Turning Breakdowns into Breakthroughs

The Co-Creative Spirit has an internal compass that points to synergy in lieu of conflict. This does not mean disagreements and breakdowns do not occur. But rather that these circumstances are opportunities for improvement, situations for turning breakdowns into breakthroughs, conditions for shifting to higher orders of thinking.

Disagreement does not naturally gravitate to conflict, but becomes a transcendent experience to turn the passion of argument into the passion of creation.

Instead of taking “positions” on issues – a certain sign that conflict is brewing – the effective leader seeks to find mutual interest, joint advantage, shared vision, common values, and combined strength to stake out a new future and a shift in thinking.

This leader will not be a great compromiser between the diverse elements, however, unless every other avenue has been explored. A compromise is usually seen as a poor second choice, the forsaking of a dream. Forging a new unity from seemingly diverse values and thinking will be the relationship champion’s first choice. This unity becomes a new order of interaction, better than the original, thereby creating a *super-ordinate* culture for the alliance.

Overly legalistic, win-lose, or adversarial negotiating styles will be highly detrimental to the overall health of the alliance in an environment of frequent repositioning.

Transformational Flexibility

In a fast moving, rapidly changing world, many strategic driving forces will be in flux -- technology is changing; customer tastes are changing; power positions are changing; priorities are changing. The underlying forces that may have been the fundamental reason the strategic relationship was formed may be in a constant state of flux, serving as a major destabilizing factor, like a rogue wave trying to capsize a boat. Thus, strategic relationships are in constant need of transformation. Bull-headed managers are quickly trapped in untenable positions by dramatic shifts in strategic driving forces. In an effort to maintain trust by establishing predictability, efforts to justify their position by self-effacing comments like: “at least you know where I stand, therefore you can trust me,” are met with increasingly incredulous stares. As the Bible says, when the blind lead the blind, both end up in a ditch.

Here it’s important to make a critical distinction about trust, ethics, and values in any strategic relationship. These are among the only things that must remain stable over the course of a strategic relationship – like an anchor to windward, providing a firm grounding for the relationship.

On the other hand, direction may change as strategic winds change, more adversarial conditions emerge, or more information is known.

For example, in the very important relationship between a doctor and their patient, the doctor’s ethics were prescribed two thousand years ago with the Hippocratic Oath. But the doctor’s treatment program must change as new lab reports provide different insights, tissue generation or degeneration occurs, etc.

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Alliance relationship managers must monitor the shifts in the strategic environment regularly, and reposition the alliance membership to align with these shifts.

Because complex organizational relationships must transform themselves frequently or lose their mission and purpose, leaders must establish a culture of visioning, breakthroughs, and co-creation as a foundation for their renegotiations. As one telecommunications executive said of his alliance in Poland,

“No one knows what the future will look like. But if we don’t talk about it, we will end up someplace else.”

Flexibility is essential to making relationships work over the long haul, because benefits to each party are seldom equal at any one point in time. Each partner can expect to see benefits unequal for short periods of time, but without flexibility to re-write an agreement, failure is lurking.

What is missing from most teams, alliances, and partnerships is a clear definition of the spirit that bonds people and organizations together, and gives them the flexibility to make adjustments as the world around them changes. This flexibility and agility can never be codified in a legal contract.

In fact, successful alliance managers proclaim that if they have to look at the legal contract, the alliance has failed. Strategic relationships exist not in the contract but in the soul and spirit of those who create and manage it. Successful synergistic relationships are best codified by a co-created set of mutually beneficial operating principles or rules of engagement than by a legalistic, trust destroying contract.

Mastery as Relationship Architects

Very seldom does synergy happen by accident. It manifests because people believe it is possible; and then design a methodology to make it a self-fulfilling prophesy. To those who build strategic relationships, our work is not just a business profession, but a mission with its roots solidly set in the "architecture of cooperation.”

Our mission is to transcend divergent points of view, thus co-generating bold new futures where differences become the ever-renewable source of creative energy, the essence of innovation, the dynamism of new possibilities. Ours is a noble endeavor -- designing the synergy of compatible differences. Daily we must use honor and integrity to build the trust that is essential to all our relationships.

Held within the seed of the collaboration architecture is the power to let us bring a new insight, a new pathway, a new hope, a new spirit, and a new power to our world.

Each day, when we create a strategic alliance and use collaborative innovation, we are contributing to the creation of that higher order of experience and action that makes our workplace a better place to live. Daily we are honing the skills, transmitting the abilities and multiplying the possibilities to bring forth a better world around us.

As we expand our capabilities in teams and alliances, we can use these proficiencies in a multitude of applications -- better businesses, better government, better teams, better families, and better communities.

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In the large span of things, step by step, relationship by relationship,
we will have created a better world for all of us.

Robert Porter Lynch



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