

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, IT'S ONLY MONEY! CONFERENCE

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PARTNERING IN RAISING OF FUNDS AND MARKETING WHAT CAN WE DO AND LEARN?

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The NCVO has just launched a new department, the "Collaborative Working Unit". It offers advice and information to groups wanting to work more closely together. It is mainly targeted at joint projects but actually looks at all elements of collaboration.

It says interest in collaborative working has increased due to various reasons:-

- Reported public perception that there are too many charities
- Government and funding pressure
- Perceived benefits for both beneficiaries and the charity

So is "partnership" a cure all for many of the problems in the charity world. Why is there new interest in it and are there really benefits?

Partnership has affected me personally, mainly for good but also for bad. In 1995 I went on a course to look at how my previous organisation CORD, learned. We scored almost zero in working with and learning from others. As a result, I spent several months fostering relationships with my peers in Tearfund UK, TEAR fund Netherlands, ZOA and Medair. We set up something called EPRO, the European Partnership of Relief Organisations. We were committed to:

- Joint training
- Joint representation to government
- Seconding staff
- Working in relief projects alongside each other

It lasted for 6 years and then came to an abrupt end. What did we learn?

- We had started to work together without thinking through the consequences
- We thought it was the right thing to do, but because it wasn't all clearly written down, there were misunderstandings
- It worked better at field level than at HQ level – indeed the collaboration was more than hoped for at field level
- It was based too much on personal relationships of a few key staff and when those people moved on, it began to fall apart
- It started as a pragmatic and tactical alliance to benefit each other. However, it was NOT integrated into the each organisation's strategies, so when the pragmatic needs changed, it came to a natural conclusion.
- Some of us feared that we would lose our identity and control. Maybe some of it was my personality. I was losing control and feared our organisation would get taken over.

This paper reflects on the whole issue of collaboration and partnership, and looks at the potential of partnership over financial issues. But, firstly, a few questions:

- What are the reasons to partner or collaborate together? Do we as Christians need to look creatively at working together in this area? If so, why? If not, why not? Are there distinctives that make Christian partnership easier – or more difficult? What should help us work together and what prevents us?
- What does partnership mean and what are the models that could be used?

- What can we learn from what is already going on?
- Is there anything that GC needs to do to help in this area?

1. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS TO PARTNER OR COLLABORATE TOGETHER:

- The increasing number of charities. Perhaps it is the individualism of the West, but the number of charities is constantly growing. For example, in 1991 there were 500 groups working with the homeless in London, now there are 2,000. Every month about 500 new charities are registered, 3,002 to date in 2005. The same trend is seen in Christian charities, and since 2000, 3,000 new charities, which define themselves as Christian in some way have registered, 619 in 2004 alone. Indeed evidently nearly 200 groups registered in 2004 with the word Christian in their title.
- Churches want us to. I was recently speaking at a church and asked what GC could do for them so they could support world mission more effectively. The chair of the mission committee gave an impassioned appeal for me to ask agencies to combine their magazines. Neither he or his colleagues had time to wade through them – “Help us”, he cried. Are we really responding to what churches are wanting by being so separate in our communications?
- We need a Biblical and theological reflection on partnership. Most of what we read on partnership is from a business and western perspective. Working alone in fund-raising without reference to others is not simply a problem of efficiency or efficacy, but is a theological matter. We need to work out what “koinonia” – fellowship or partnership – means for us as Christians.

2. WHAT DOES PARTNERSHIP MEAN? The problem with the word ‘partner’ is that we may use it differently in different contexts. At a partnership meeting as long ago as ten years, local agencies asked me not to use the word “partner” any more, it was a dirty word to them implying inequality, control and lack of trust by the western group. I have never been so ashamed. A recent article in Third Sector highlighted the views of public service charities in their relationship with government bodies. Only 13% of respondents felt treated as equal partners. It may well be no different for many of our “partners”.

Do we seek to keep control in inappropriate ways? Do we make all the decisions, hold all the strings, demand the other group plays to our tune? How can we be more effective, creative, fair and Christ-like in the way we use the incredible resources we have in the West.

There are many “models” used to explain partnership.

Communication	Co-operation	Collaboration	Constitution
Increasingly strategic to the right			

Interestingly in this model there is a great rush from collaboration to merger without the middle places below.

Respectful Co-operation	Informal collaboration	Formal partnership	Joint venture	Merger
Increasingly strategic to the right				

Even words are used in different ways. Collaboration – very formal in model 1 but informal in model 2. Is not really strategic. Then there are words like Alliance, federation and many others.

Whatever words are used and whatever we mean by them, at the end of the day there are really only two main types of partnership:-

- a) Tactical or pragmatic – low cost, low risk, easy to start and end, short term goals, low but definable rewards, no major effect on agency if it stops.
- b) Strategic – higher cost and risk, hard to work through, longer term goals, higher potential rewards, major implications if it breaks down.

3. LESSONS LEARNED: I have learnt many lessons from both the successful and unsuccessful partnerships in which I have been involved. I highlighted some of them earlier but I list a few more that I believe could be applied to any partnership, joint venture or whatever – tactical or strategic.

- Partner on the issues that you feel strongly about! A small agency cannot partner on hundreds of projects – choose the right way for you.
- Ensure that is a clear goal that all partners agree to in the context of the collaboration.
- A partner needs to ensure it is working for the good of the people we seek to serve together, and not its own glory. “I must decrease that He might increase” must be the heart felt cry. So what if you don’t get your group’s name in lights, or the money you need, as long as the aim is fulfilled. Does our heart leap for joy when we enable someone else to fulfil our goals? Otherwise we just seek to build our own empire first rather than Christ’s and will complain when others unintentionally or otherwise seem to steal our staff, expertise and resources. As Malcolm Duncan recently wrote in the Christian Herald, Partner because it is “right”, not just because it is good for you. Every now and then God challenges us to give away the best of ourselves in partnership.
- Each partner must understand the benefits the other partner brings. Each partner brings different skills and resources, not all of which can be measured in financial terms. We must value those whom we are working alongside.
- Partners need to agree at which level the partnership is founded – tactical, financial or strategic. The more strategic it is, the more whole organisation needs to buy in at different levels
- Partners need to be open with each other. When we start to feel excluded by the other, we need to talk about it and not stew on it. Not easy for the ‘stiff upper lip’ Brit!
- Agreements need to be written down, constantly revised and ultimately evaluated.

4. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MODELS AROUND IN MARKETING?

There are thousand of examples of alliances, partnerships, joint ventures, collaborative ventures in PROJECTS, but seem to be few in the marketing and raising funds. As Christians we often work closely together on the ground, but it seems to be less so in marketing etc.

- a) **Airline industry.** The **Star Alliance** network was established in May 1997 as the first truly global airline alliance “to provide customers the benefits of global reach and a smooth travel experience”. Today, the network covers 795 airports in 139 countries, with over 15,000 daily departures.
- b) Many of these flights have co-ordinated schedules to make connections easier. So wherever you're flying in the world, and however complicated your itinerary, chances are the Star Alliance network can make it easier.

Good news too if you're a frequent flyer. By being a member of a frequent flyer programme of just one of the member airlines, you can actually earn frequent flyer benefits right across the network. All in all, it means each journey becomes a more enjoyable and enriching experience.

Well that's what they say. Through the Star Alliance I am looking forward to a free trip to Australia in two years time. It has meant:-

- Some co-ordination at project level on flights
- Each agency keeps own identity and name
- Similar marketing campaigns and references to each other
- All customers benefit and has brought brand loyalty
- Strategic at a formal collaboration partnership level

b) Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). A group we are all familiar with after the Tsunami. 13 agencies, both secular and Christian, join together to raise funds for public emergencies. Raised over £300m for the Tsunami – would it have been less if it had kept separate? Or more?

It means:

- No one appeals or advertises to the general public once the appeal is launched but they can raise funds from their own supporters
- Money is divided up on the basis of an agreement, based on turnover on previous disasters
- Each agency keeps its own projects. No joint working on the field proscribed
- Separate marketing joint venture funded by the members
- A strategic partnership in a joint venture, yet not as strategic as many formal partnerships need to be

c) Traidcraft Christmas Cards. Traidcraft, Christian Aid, CAFOD and SCIAF have decided to do joint cards via Traidcraft. Traidcraft does all the marketing.

It means:

- The agencies have a hassle free run up to Christmas!!
- Money is divided up on the basis of an agreement
- No joint projects on the field
- Low risk
- A joint venture, yet only really a tactical one for one project. They might or might not combine on other issues.

These are just three examples. There are many others that could have been used, for example, Making Poverty History, the Marathon.

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Martin Lee, September 2005

*Martin asked for response to the following two questions:

- **What areas of marketing and fund-raising could we seriously look at doing together?**

Responses:

- Writing to own lists about joint project (problems – where money gets divided)
- Joint booklet/course to get people into mission – ie a recruiting tool
- Legacy leaflet
- Reciprocal mailing (Data P)
- Complimentary agencies
- Acknowledge local churches in disasters. Good for disasters but not relational.
- D.E.C. – negative or positive?
- Areas where people want to work together. Advertised in same place eg training.
- Promoting concept of mission generally, not specific organisation
- sharing professional standards and Best Practice
- Centralised Gift processing/banking
- Events – simple; why not beyond? – complicated?
- Magazines – eg Mission Matters, and others
- Front-end cooperation eg 1 telephone number, etc.
- Joint effort at CRE/Wherehouse (tactical only)
- Countrywide collaboration
- Need a “lead” agency
- Joint appeals.

- **Is there anything Global Connections can do to help in this area?**

Responses:

- Unite mission societies
- Advertise things like F.I.C.O.
- Raising profile of world mission especially in churches.
- Joint mission magazine (Mission Matters)
- Joint website eg children at risk
- Joint research – eg HIV
- Joint group – education (limit the numbers)
- Make a start somewhere!
- Market Research
- Produce myth-busting - re admin costs/uniqueness of Christ
- Spring Harvest - Wherehouse (limit numbers, scope, timescale)
- Keswick – theological basis of giving
- Geographical awareness-raising
- Sharing resources/offices
- Connect! (fundraising ideas)
- GC be broker for common geographical/thematic work eg Muslim world/medical
- Personnel recruitment and training
- Understanding core costs – educating donors
- Promoting Gift Aid
- Joint music/sports event. (on global issues)
- GC Web links for fundraising efforts - Joint Services
- Processing gift aid, legacies.
- Exhibiting – CRE, etc
- Reciprocal mailings – examining duplication
- New areas of cooperation – street children? AI DS? Understanding of Jewish needs.
- Backroom cooperation (fundraising)