The Rhythm of Business®

Engaging Collaboratively

Techniques for Bridging Differences and Aligning on a Path Forward

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Bridging Differences Collaboratively – A Deliberate Process

This process is generative and iterative. You may need to think through it more than once to arrive at an aligned option

01

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

Gain clarity and align on what you are trying to solve for. Define what success in this instance is for the alliance. Consider specific criteria to define success

02

WHAT ARE THE KEY ASSUMPTIONS?

Identify the assumptions each party has about how to achieve success and what they are concerned about

03

WHAT ARE THE PARTIES' MOTIVATING INTERESTS?

Identify what matters to each party including any limitations have been established by alliance governance and each party's relevant executives

04

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Brainstorm multiple options that could achieve the success the alliance seeks

05

WHICH OPTIONS WILL PROVE THE ASSUMPTIONS?

Evaluate each option's ability to achieve success and address motivating interests

06

AGREE TO PURSUE THE BEST OPTION

This is the option most likely to achieve success while addressing the parties' interests

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Conducting a Collaborative Project

To avoid each party working in silos and then attempting to align separate positions, take the time to plan the work jointly:

- Agree what success is
- Define the role of the lead party and the role of the non-lead party
- Agree to the points at which the parties will check in with each other to assess progress
- Get whatever guidance from both alliance and internal governance is required
- Appreciate the guardrails of the Agreement and earlier decisions

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Practices for Effective Communication

Common Language with Shared Meaning

- Different interpretations of purpose, agreement terms, what defines a milestone, etc., can be the source of misalignment
- Partners need to have the same mental picture to have shared meaning

Use Structured Listening to Ensure Common Language

- Listen
- Repeat back
- Clarify
- Agree you have the same understanding
- Appreciate any emotion connected to the message

Establish Communication Norms and Honor Them

- Set regular one-on-ones with counterparts; regular meetings of cross-functional teams
- Ensure counterparts have each other's phone numbers and set time boundaries about when it is OK to call (other than emergencies)

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Techniques for Having Challenging Conversations

In all partnerships there are times honest, blunt conversation is required to address a problem or provide critical feedback. When done right, they are discussions that build trust. Done poorly, they can destroy a carefully built relationship

Time and place
Open-ended, one-on-one discussion

The art of the question
Use questions to understand motivations and interests

Prevent defensiveness
Avoid commitments that will later be regretted

No ambushes
Give time to prepare

Fact-based
Acknowledge when more information is needed

Agree on next steps
Even if it is just to meet again at a time certain, be aligned

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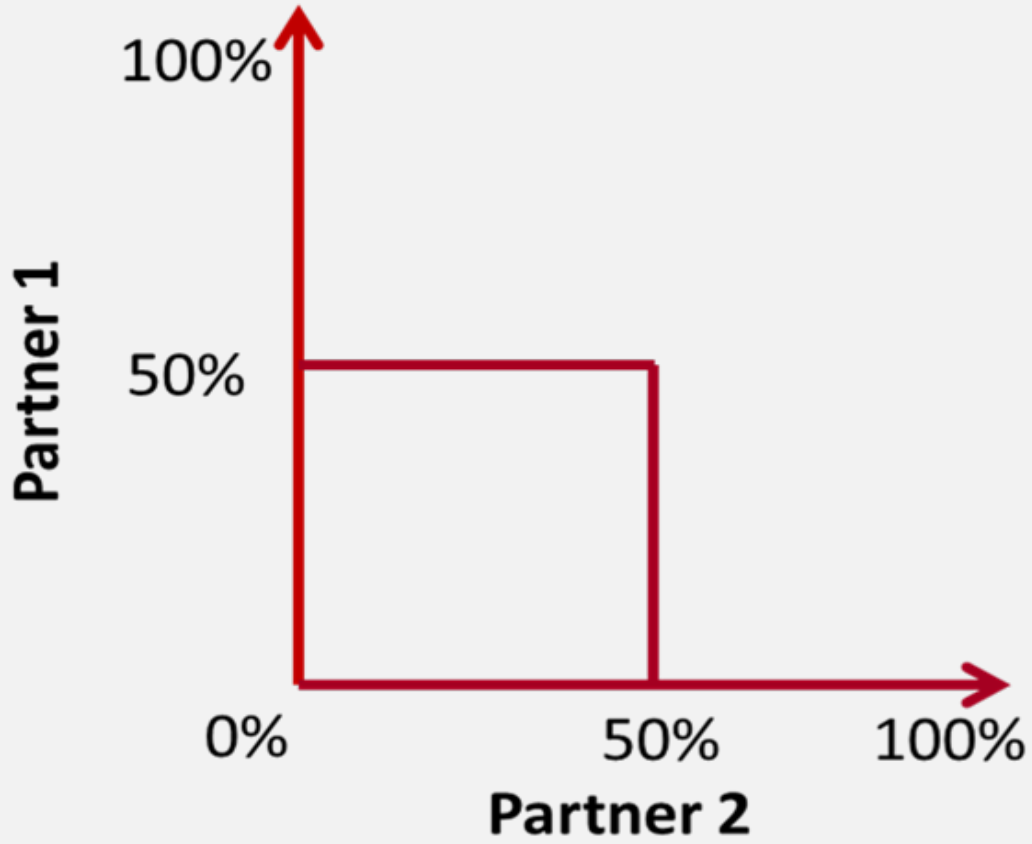
Compromise Isn't the Best Way to Create Consensus



Adapted from Ury and Fisher, Getting to Yes

Leaves value on the table

No one is happy with the outcome

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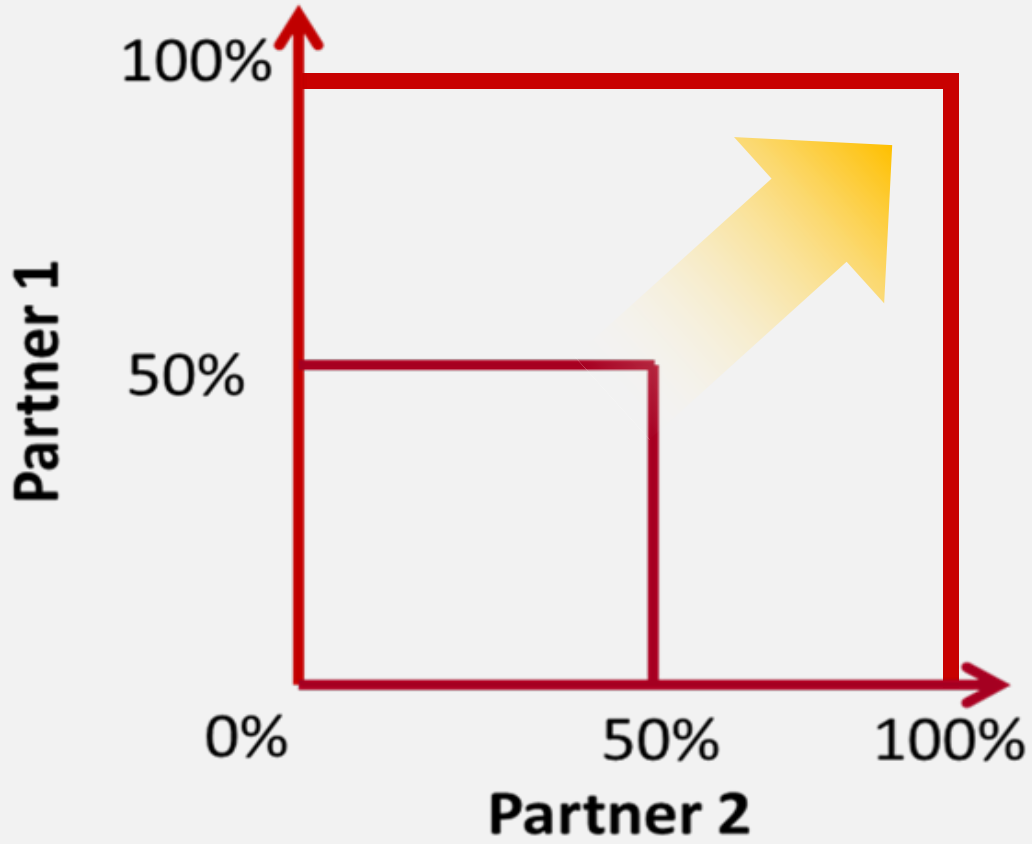
Collaboration Is!



Adapted from Ury and Fisher, Getting to Yes

Encourages innovative thinking

Tries to satisfy each party as much as possible

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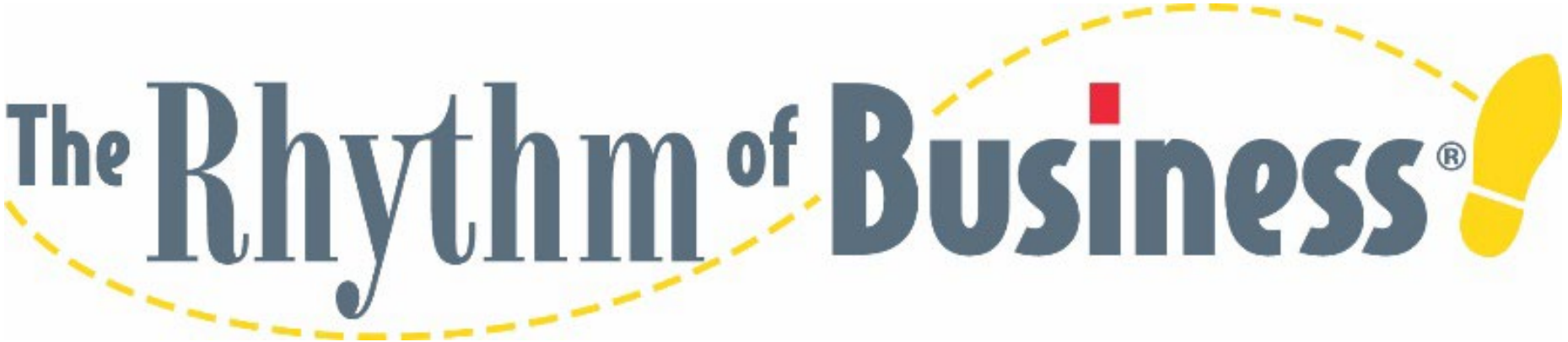

Empowering Partnering and Collaboration Success

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