



**Building Collaboration:  
Lake City Chamber, DIRT, and Marketing Board**

**Summary of Discussion**  
April 23, 2009

*A Service of Downtown Colorado, Inc.*

## Overview of Session

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On April 23, 2009, representatives of the Lake City Chamber of Commerce, DIRT, and the Lake City Marketing Board convened to discuss potential ways that all three organizations could collaborate and work together more closely. This discussion followed individual discussions between the organizations, financial challenges to the organizations as a result of the economic downturn, and a recommendation from the DIRT Main Street Resource Team (provided in October 2008 by Downtown Colorado, Inc.) to investigate ways to work together more.

The primary purposes of the discussion were two-fold:

- 1) To enable the boards, staff, and contractors of each organization to understand the organizations' differences and similarities; and
- 2) To enable each organization to identify ways to collaborate more in the future.

The service was coordinated by Downtown Colorado, Inc., which retained Stephanie Redman, President of ReSurge, Inc. to facilitate the discussion. The meeting agenda, participant list, summary of discussion notes, and suggested next steps all follow.

## Agenda

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- I. Welcome and introductions
- II. Overview of each organization's mission and primary activities
- III. Discussion of overlapping areas/projects
- IV. Identification of future partnerships
- V. Identification of barriers to partnership development
- VI. Concluding remarks

## Participants

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Kristine Borchers  
Allen Brown  
Angela Hollingsworth  
Jud Hollingsworth  
Marian Hollingsworth

Greg Levine  
Lynn McNitt  
Steve Mikeska  
Cindy Nelson  
Steve Robinson

Laurie Vierheller  
Kathleen Whinnery  
Stan Whinnery  
Daniele Worthen



Cooperative efforts among all four groups were initiated this year

Organizations realize the need to have closer working relationship to avoid duplication

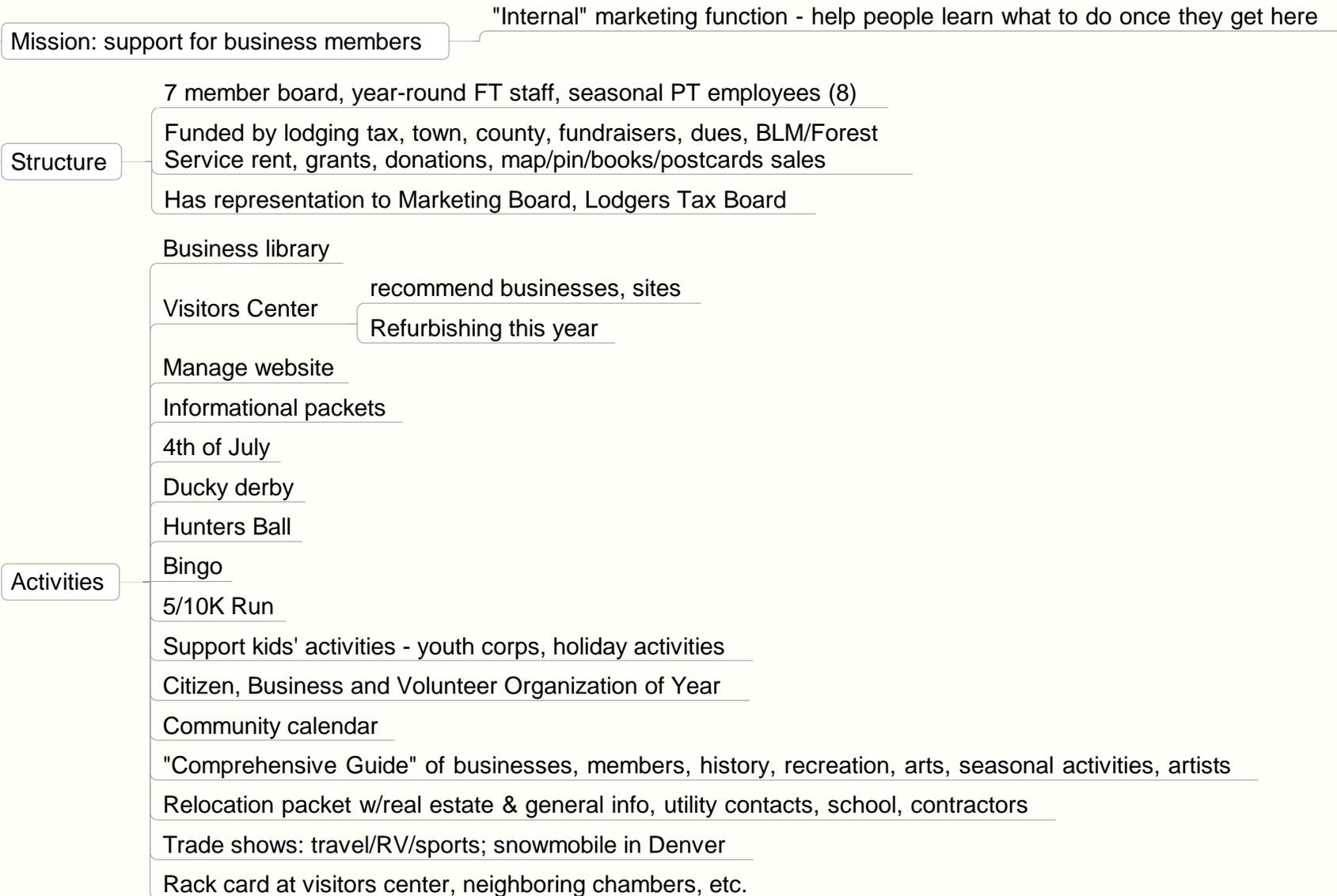
Response to cooperative effort seems positive

Chamber, DIRT, and Marketing Board have agreed to work in three defined areas, but each struggles financially

Conflict/potential conflict arises around funding sources

May still be some confusion about the Chamber and Marketing Board's respective internal/external marketing functions

# Chamber



**DIRT**

Mission: strengthen, revitalize and broaden the economic base of downtown while recognizing its historic social significance and using the Main Street Four Point Approach

**Structure**

12 member board, PT Exec Director, approximately 170 volunteers

Funded through town, county, fund-raising activities, donations, "Contribution Project" for state tax credits, grants, Lodgers Tax project grants

**Design**

3rd St gardens, boardwalk, benches, flowerbeds, interpretive signage, kiosk in park, Youth Corps, DT Design Plan w/CCCD, bike rack mural, Buying History brochure

**Organization**

Cosponsor community volunteer celebration, grant-writing, fund-raising (Art Walk, auction; ornaments, strategic planning, goal setting, Wine & Music Fest), e-newsletter, annual report, state MS reports

**Projects**

**Promotion**

Lake City Uncorked, partner with others' events, 3rd St. arts market, townwide yard sale, LC History Month, assist w/Chbr holiday calendar, Missing Mistletoe, Salsa/Dip contest, materials for DIRT, events; website for DIRT, support for others' sites, kid-friendly brochure, historic LC marketing plan

**Economic Restructuring**

Feasibility study overall economic development, annual summit, monthly coffee, business services (revolving loan, business visitations), increasing telecommuters, location-neutral biz, buy local program w/Chamber, business/resident/tourist surveys, sales tax analysis, biz newsletter

# Marketing Board

Mission: "External" Marketer of LC - attracts visitors to community (Lake City & County)

## Structure

3 member board of Chamber, town, and county representatives

Consultant produces guide, manages website on contract

Office support from town

Funded by Lodging Tax, town & county donations, occasional grants, e.g. CLG grant for historic interpretive signs

## Projects

Coordinate visitors guide w/Chamber - 15K produced

Maintain, manage website

In-room binders for hotels, businesses

Monthly newsletter on visitor info

Google Ad campaign - winter & fall

# Lodgers Tax Board

Mission: allocates collected lodging tax funds to nonprofit organizations who apply

## Structure

County Committee

Report to County Commissioners

Working to establish policies, procedures, bylaws

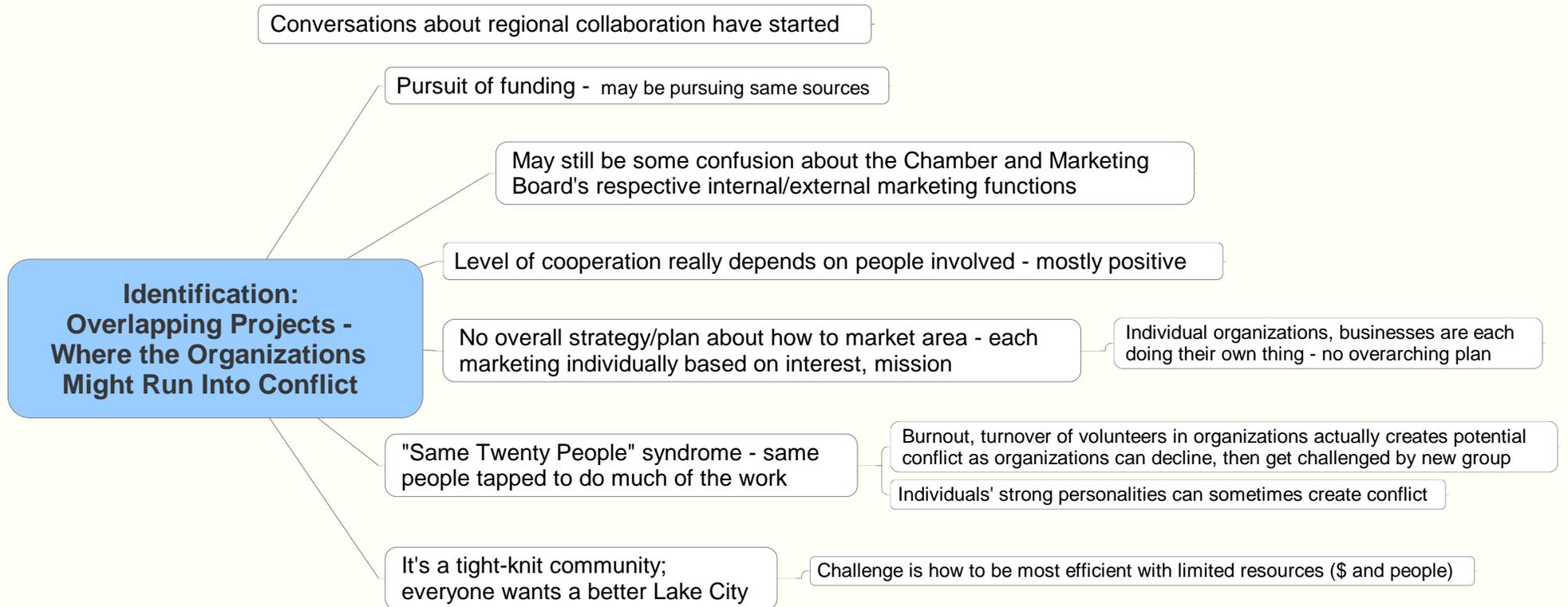
5-7 member board comprised of Chamber president, DIRT, marketing board member, lodge owner, business owner, financial institution rep, at-large community member

## Projects

This year, funded museum, Marketing Board, Chamber, DIRT

Last year, funded \$43K

Meet quarterly



## General Observations

A generational shift in community leadership and thinking seems to be happening

The recent combined volunteer recognition ceremony is a great example of collaboration and of doing things differently

## Future Partnerships to Pursue

In Fall 2009, develop strategic marketing plan for community (+)

Put the Marketing Board and its functions back under the Chamber as a committee of Chamber (+)

DIRT & Chamber collaboration on business support (+)

Share administration between DIRT & Chamber (+)

Expand cooperation on existing collaborative events (+)

Develop a one-page fact sheet on who does what among the organizations

## General barriers to collaboration:

Money and time constraints for all organizations

Communication - must keep everyone informed and regularly share information

History & personalities

In Fall 2009, develop strategic marketing plan for community

Involve Chamber, MB, Lodgers Tax Board, DIRT

Identify what should happen overall

Identify who does what

Potential Barriers to implementation:

Time commitment

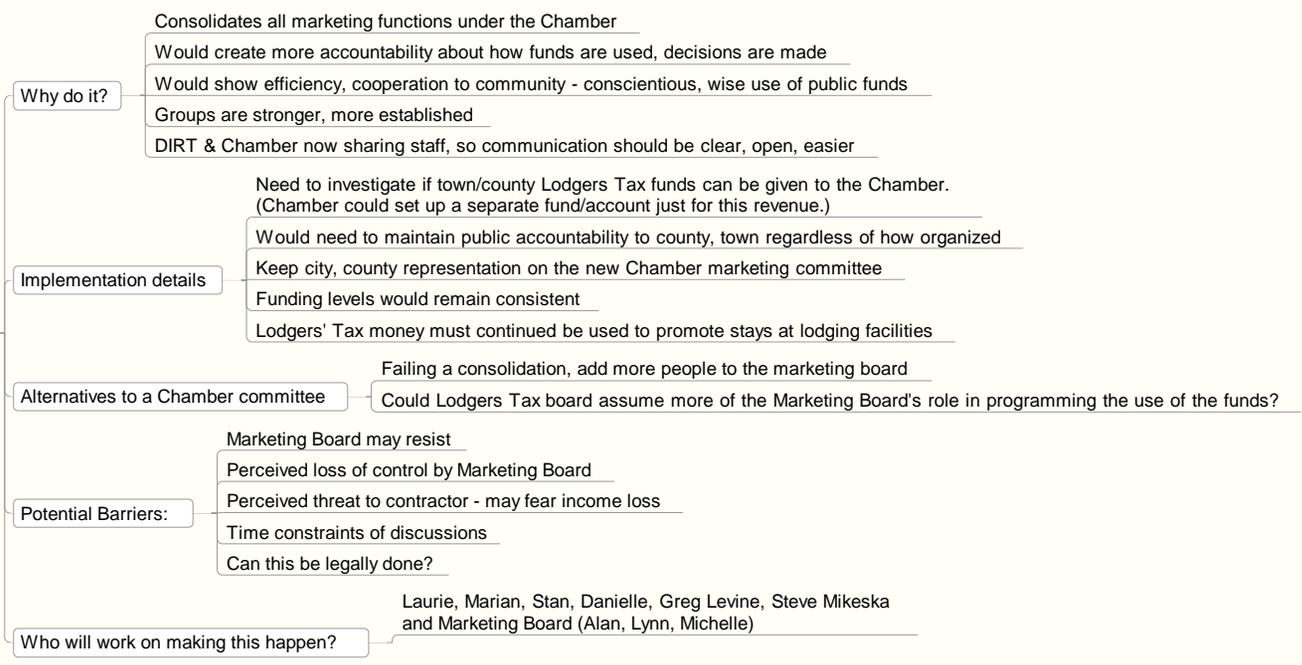
Timing of planning process

A significant shift in thinking from consultant-driven plan to community-driven, community-owned plan

History - we've done it the consultant-driven way for a long time

Organizers: Alan, Kathleen, Lynn, Greg, Kristie, Angela, Danielle, Mary Karken?, Town representative

Put the Marketing Board and its functions back under the Chamber as a committee of Chamber







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**Stephanie Redman**

*President*

## Suggested Next Steps in Building Collaboration

Congratulations to the Lake City Chamber of Commerce, DIRT, and Marketing Board for coming together to discuss potential collaborations. Any community is smart to look at ways that its various organizations can streamline operations and/or work together on projects and activities, but this is especially true for small communities that have multiple organizations with overlapping volunteers and similar or compatible goals.

In order to build on and maximize the time invested by participants in this discussion, I encourage you to pursue the following key activities. By building on the April 23 conversation and moving forward with additional steps, there is little doubt that Lake City's major marketing and economic development organizations will be more efficient and that the entire community will be better-served.

Accordingly, I encourage the group to:

- I. **Continue the conversation.** Staff of the Chamber and DIRT identified the need to meet regularly and continue to discuss and identify ways that both organizations can work more closely together. This will be a productive step, but I encourage the boards of each organization (or the officers/executive committees, at minimum) to meet 2 to 4 times a year to review activities, provide project updates, evaluate collaborative projects that might be underway, and identify/plan future collaborative activities.
- II. **Convene the working groups identified for both the Marketing Plan project and the "consolidation" of internal and external marketing functions under the Chamber of Commerce.** The discussion notes reflect the names of people who either volunteered to continue working on those projects or who should be involved. I encourage those groups to begin to meet and to discuss and identify strategies, steps, and timelines for moving forward with those two separate projects.

If the Marketing Plan group wants to develop the plan this fall, I encourage the group to begin meeting no later than June (preferably earlier) to identify the desired scope of the plan, how the group would like it to be developed (internally, with a consultant, by a consultant, etc.), who is going to guide that process, funding, etc. By starting relatively soon, the group will be able to tackle these initial questions and get the appropriate people and other resources lined up so that the planning process truly can begin in the fall.

- III. **Do a little reading on nonprofit collaboration.** Several organizations have written about key elements and procedures for crafting partnerships and collaboration between nonprofit organizations. I encourage participants to do some additional reading on the subject to ensure that all groups have a clear understanding of what are the most successful ways to enter into a collaborative activity. Two short articles are included at the end of this document. For a more extensive handbook, go to

<http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/NONPROFIT/collaboration.pdf> to view or download the publication entitled *Nonprofit Collaboration and Mergers: Finding the Right Fit (A Resource Guide for Nonprofits)*.

- IV. **Use the following steps to define how each future joint project will be addressed.** While it may take a little time for each organization to work through this procedure, I believe this investment will pay big dividends in the long run by setting clear expectations and terms of the relationship – and helping to ensure that a partnership route is the best approach for each organization to follow.

Before committing to a collaborative approach on a project or activity, each participating organization (board and staff) should:

- A. **Define the partnership** by identifying and describing the desired relationship, its benefits, and the desired structure for the collaboration.
- B. **Identify the pros and cons of the partnership** to understand clearly the full implications – good and bad – of the potential collaboration.
- C. **Identify what each organization should contribute to the partnership** or do on the project, with the understanding that your group may need to compromise on this list eventually.
- D. **Negotiate these details.** Representatives of both organizations should discuss and reach agreement about who will do what, how projects will be funded, who will get credit, what defines success, how long the partnership will occur, what are grounds for stopping the relationship, etc. These may seem like small matters initially, but if not mutually determined from the beginning can lead to major conflict later.
- E. **Put it in writing.** Even if it's nothing more than an email that recaps the terms that both organizations agreed to during their negotiations, have a written document that states what each organization is responsible for doing and providing in the partnership. The more detail, the better in order to avoid misunderstandings later. Agreements can be simple documents that define what each group will do, or they can be more elaborate Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) or Memoranda of Agreement (MOA). In either case, each group's governing boards should ratify the terms of the agreement, and they should be signed by the appropriate signatories (typically board president and staff).
- F. **Mutually monitor/evaluate the relationship.** Like any good inter-personal relationship, relationships between organizations also need "care and feeding." Both parties should conduct an internal and/or collaborative review to evaluate the collaboration and to determine if any aspects of the collaboration need to be modified. If the groups have done good work in negotiating the details of their collaborative agreement and have identified when it might be appropriate to stop the partnership, then severing ties will be easier for both groups.

Best of luck to each group as you continue your collaborative efforts. I applaud you for making the effort to work together more and in a better fashion, and I wish you the best of luck as you move forward – together.

-Stephanie Redman



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*President*

## Tips for Creating Effective Nonprofit Partnerships

Partnerships between nonprofit organizations can lead to more effective and vibrant activities for both, while helping to conserve partners' limited resources, including volunteers and money.

Partnerships are typically generated among the organizations or are driven the request of a funder(s). Generally speaking, when an organization recognizes the need and opportunity for a productive partnership and commits to making it happen, the partnership is deeper, more effective, and more satisfying for both parties. Funder-generated partnerships also can be effective, but often falter once the funder leaves the picture.

In order to develop effective partnerships, the staff and board of directors of the partner organizations must be fully committed to the idea – and should approach a potential partnership with “eyes wide open.”

BoardSource, a national training and informational resource for nonprofit boards, has identified the following key elements in creating an effective nonprofit partnership. These include the following.

- Board and CEO leadership that believes strongly in the partnership and acts to strengthen it.
- The boards approve clearly stated outcomes, roles, responsibilities, and resource allocations.
- Boards are willing to “let go” of who gets the credit or to mutually agree on the subject of who claims what.
- Multiple forms of communication that keep all stakeholders in the loop.
- Ongoing face-to-face contact to build trust and familiarity.
- A flexible mindset that understands mistakes will be made and plans may change.
- An arrangement for canceling the agreement if the partnership is clearly not working.
- Early evidence of success that is shared among both organizations to assure everyone that the collaboration is on the right track.

Adapted from **Making Nonprofit Partnerships Effective**, BoardSource.org.



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President

## 5 Key Elements of a Strategic Partnership

Source: [www.nptimes.com/howtos/management.html](http://www.nptimes.com/howtos/management.html)

Forming strategic partnerships can aid organizations in advancing their causes. Author Katya Andresen, wrote in her book *Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes*, that nonprofits must first answer five strategic questions when identifying, assessing and creating partnerships.

1. Who is also trying to reach your audience? Begin by thinking expansively about organizations -- nonprofit and private -- that currently are, or would like to, reach your audience. Include organizations that seem to be competitors and groups working on different issues with your audience.
2. Who wins when we win? Ask yourself, if you succeed in moving your audience to take action, which organizations on the above list would benefit? This becomes a "hit list" of potential partners. Look for partners with a compatible agenda and the potential for both organizations to be rewarded philanthropically, financially, image-wise, or through increased efficiency, access to new markets and resources or increased employee morale. Make a note of the gain for both your organization and the partner.
3. What are the pros and cons? Assess the possibility for exploitation, dependence and blurring of mission. Consider cultural differences, level of commitment and capacity limitations on each side. Create a balance sheet for you and your partner and list all of the potential benefits versus drawbacks. Ensure mutual benefit.
4. How do we form the partnership? Start it at the top of each organization. It's best to have someone in charge with executive support and commitment. The more tangible and specific the request, the better. Time, resources, responsibilities, budgets and deadline should be clearly spelled out. Construct up-front consequences should an effort fall short.
5. How do we stay on track? Form numerous personal connections and remain flexible in regard to changing dynamics on both sides. Communication is key. Update partners on a regular basis, ask for their input and thank them for their work. Disagreements should be confronted quickly and openly. Make mid-course corrections, address poor performance and clarify responsibilities together. Knowing when to stop a partnership is just as important. Better a clean finish than death by disintegration.