External Partnership Management: 
History’s Successes and Failures

Diana McLain Smith, author of *Divide or Conquer*, compares two partnerships. First, there was the partnership between Steve Jobs and John Sculley. Jobs lured Sculley away from Pepsi in the 1980s when Apple was growing fast. It seemed to be a perfect relationship until Apple’s sales dropped. Within months each was attacking the other, resenting the same qualities that they originally valued in the other.

Compare that to the partnership of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt during World War II. Faced with a much more devastating situation, they built an alliance that was strong enough to win a war. When things became difficult they did not point fingers and place blame like Jobs and Sculley. They did quite the opposite. They defended each other to their critics, continued to offer help, and tried to understand what the other was up against. Jon Meachum, editor of *Newsweek*, believes there are two aspects that Churchill and Roosevelt honored that made their partnership work.

First, they kept the mission and their relationship in mind. They knew that their relationship would have an impact on the success or failure of their mission.

Second, they understood that complex tasks are frustrating. When they disagreed, they explored each other’s views as well as the facts.

It can be exciting to be able to review history and learn from the successes and failures. Meet with your manager or coach and relate this brief story. Lead a discussion to help you prepare to use partnerships to support and grow the business. You may wish to ask:

- Can you think of examples like these where partnerships were either a disaster or a success? What made them successful or not?
- What partnerships at our organization are successful like the Churchill/Roosevelt partnership?
- What role does relationship play in successful partnerships?
- How can we best remember the value of maintaining relationships, especially when our goals are so important?
- What can I do to ensure that I maintain the partnership relationship when frustrated?
- What is my role in using partnerships to support and grow the business?
- What advice do you have for me as a future leader with regard to partnerships?