



How to Harness the Power of We

BY RANA FLORIDA

Collaborations can bring your business into entirely new territories--if they're done right.

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As entrepreneurs we are used to being our own one-stop-shop. Successful leaders know their own strengths and accept their weaknesses. Finding the right partners or teammates early on who can compliment your skills maximizes results and can often differentiate a successful business from a doomed one.

Collaborations allow several benefits, including:

- They provide better deliverables by using people for their strengths, compensating for your weaknesses.
- They bring more resources to the table.
- They allow for idea exchange.
- They expand your work into other areas.

- They introduce new insights and discoveries.

Key Steps for Collaboration

First identify the need for the partnership

Understand your strengths and weaknesses and write them down. Think about all the key areas: not just accounting and finance, technology, sales and marketing, communications, operations and strategy, but graphic design, social media and creativity.

Collaborators are not only necessary to maintain business operations but also to expand your product or service into new areas. Zaha Hadid, a world-renowned architect, used collaboration to create a limited-edition collection of tennis shoes for Lacoste. Using fluid grips, which wrap around the foot, the shoes are specially designed to move with the body.

“Teamwork has been very important to me for a long time. I’ve always believed in it,” she told me. “A brilliant design still benefits from the input of others. . . . You must learn early on that you can’t do everything yourself; you can do bits of it yourself, you can ask people to do things the way you want them done, but you also have to rely on their strengths and abilities.”

Put feelers out

The right partner is crucial in helping you grow, but the wrong partner can eat up time and resources. Ask friends, family, and colleagues for possible leads. Referrals and references can mark the difference between A player and a C player.

Evaluate the partner’s capabilities and strengths

Finding a partner with the complimentary skills is essential, but finding someone with a genuine passion for the project is even better.

Assess the working situation

You have to like working together. Partnerships won’t flourish and grow out of resentment or ill will. The best collaborations come from a healthy and solid relationship.

Set up an initial project with a limited time period to test the relationship

Whether it is two weeks, a month, six months; it’s important to clearly communicate expectations and agree upon how to measure success within a given time frame.

Keep evaluating along the way

Sometimes one collaborator isn’t enough. It’s important to understand how all partners are contributing and to stop and check-in along the way. Collaborations have to work for all the partners or else you will hit a dead-end.

Think about collaborations as more than just ways to compensate for your weaknesses-;they are bigger than the sum of their parts, and as such they can help you or your organization to advance.

IMAGE: [shutterstock images](#)

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Rana has more than two decades of experience in corporate strategy, communications, marketing and branding. She previously directed global strategic communications for HMSHost, one of the world's largest airport developers, where she led all marketing, advertising and communication efforts.

Rana is the author of *Upgrade, Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary* (McGraw-Hill). She also writes the Creative Spaces series for HGTV and the Huffington Post, where she highlights public and private spaces that epitomize creativity, innovation, design and new ways of thinking. Rana recently wrote and was featured in the business section of The New York Times. For almost a decade, Rana was an internationally syndicated advice columnist in major daily newspapers and a regular Fox News contributor for several years.

Rana continues to work with major media including CNN, MSNBC, NPR, BBC, CBC and shows such as Good Morning America, Charlie Rose, The Colbert Report, The Today Show and 60 Minutes.

Throughout her career, Rana has lent her expertise to several boards including Airports Council International in Washington, DC, the Council for International Visitors, and the The Founders Junior Council, Detroit Institute of Arts. Rana remains heavily involved in philanthropy as a board member for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra as well as supporting numerous charitable organizations. She is currently an advisory board member for the online retailer Shop.ca.

Rana holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications and a MBA in marketing and management.
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