



GETTING PAST GO

A START-UP GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIP

Getting Past Go is a collection of materials designed to help organisations explore the idea of workplace partnership. It's a basic introduction to what's involved in working together in partnership, and the benefits and challenges for organisations adopting this approach. We've gathered together information to help you get started and keep moving towards a more productive workplace relationship.

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MORALE AND MOTIVATION

Morale. *n.* the degree of confidence or optimism of a person or group.

Motivation. *n.* the reason or inspiration for a course of action.

Morale and motivation are two of the key attributes of partnership. Not only are these important in maintaining a partnership long-term, they can also be a good indicator of how you are progressing towards building a successful working partnership. When morale is high and the partners are motivated, you have a greater chance of success.

Achieving successful partnership isn't always easy. It requires everyone to be motivated to make it work, even when things become difficult, or they face frustrations with the process. There also needs to be a good level of morale in the workplace. The road to partnership can sometimes be bumpy, and this can test the commitment of the partners. At times, you may find it challenging to maintain people's motivation and keep morale high.

ARE YOU MOTIVATED TO SUCCEED?

Partnership can be described as 'the kind of relationship you have when you are committed to each other's success'. Each partner must be motivated to make this kind of relationship work, and in a true partnership, this motivation needs to come from a commitment to your own success, as well as the success of the other partners – not at their expense.

Ask yourself, are you looking for a quick-fix solution to a problem, or do you really want to create a working partnership? If the motivation for partnership is just an alternative way to carry out collective bargaining, or a fast track



to achieve management or union objectives, there is little chance of sustainable success. The real motivation for partnership is based on the desire to find a different and better way of working. The partners are motivated by the opportunity to:

- experience more constructive workplace relationships
- build a sustainable high-performance organisation
- create a better and more enjoyable place to work
- improve the conditions and rights of workers
- minimise conflict and confrontation and increase co-operation
- enhance business performance
- build mutual respect between the union and the employer.



These outcomes can be strong motivators. It's a good idea to periodically remind yourself of why you initially committed to building a partnership, particularly when motivation or morale is not as good as it could be. Remember, the evidence shows that constructive partnerships between managers and unions contribute to better overall performance.

THE MORALE AND MOTIVATION DILEMMA

The dilemma you may come across as you begin to build morale and motivation is how to shift the common assumption that control is necessary to motivate people to achieve business objectives. In fact, motivation and control are often at odds with one another. The goal is to have management and staff committed to the mutually agreed outcomes



without resorting to paternalistic behaviours or legal controls. You will need to accommodate the freedoms necessary to empower people and gain their support, while still retaining sufficient control to manage their outcomes.

CRISIS CAN BE A MOTIVATION FOR PARTNERSHIP

Sometimes a major crisis – such as a relationship breakdown, poor business performance, economic or competitive pressure, or very low workplace morale is the initial motivation for

exploring partnership. When an organisation is faced with change or instability, a conventional management response is often to 'restructure' or 'reorganise' the business. This is typically reactive and likely to provoke resistance from the staff and the union.

In these circumstances, adopting a partnership approach can be an attractive alternative. It might provide the motivation for the union and the employer to embark on partnership. When facing a crisis, partnership principles and practices can help an organisation and its staff work together to deal constructively with the situation or threat, and build a stronger, more viable operation.

While a crisis might provide the motivation to work in partnership, it can also erode the trust between management and workers, between management and unions, and sometimes even between workers and the union. It's important to understand that a partnership born out of crisis will mean you have to work to regain trust, build morale and refocus everyone on the real long-term motivations for partnership.

BUILDING THE MOTIVATION AND MORALE YOU NEED TO MAKE A PARTNERSHIP WORK

You will build motivation and morale in your organisation by demonstrating your ongoing commitment to partnership. One way to do this is for union leaders and management to show each other that they are prepared to take action to build the partnership at all levels of the organisation. Here are some ways you can demonstrate your commitment, stay motivated and boost morale:

- Provide the resources necessary for people to engage effectively.
- Build the systems and networks that enable people to share their knowledge and experiences across the organisation.
- Make time for partnership forums, discussions and training – keep talking about why you are working to build a partnership.
- Ensure union representatives have time

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to carry out their partnership roles and responsibilities, and union members have time to meet with them.

- Allow managers time to explore what partnership means to them and their jobs, so they can adapt to meet the challenges of partnership.
- Create opportunities for people across the organisation to problem-solve, innovate and share their ideas.
- Make time for managers and union representatives to meet and discuss partnership – how it applies to their roles and the projects they are working on.
- Communicate well – get the right people in the room at the right time. Ensure people have the skills to communicate effectively and assign people the responsibility of co-ordinating joint communications like newsletters, email announcements and notice boards.
- Share the rewards of partnership with those who are making it work – management, the union and staff.

MAINTAINING MORALE AND MOTIVATION – THE CHALLENGES

Once you’re on the road to partnership, you might find that things move more slowly than you’d like. When this happens, it can be difficult to keep the initial enthusiasm and momentum going. Motivation and morale may suffer. This is particularly true when there is a history of difficult, acrimonious, or tense relations between the partners. In this situation, some individuals may find it challenging to focus in the present and frequently bring up things from the past. Old behaviours, perceptions and beliefs about each other can sabotage the present motivation and commitment to working together and lower morale.

You may also find that individuals that aren’t fully committed to the partnership use these old behaviours to deliberately reinforce the traditional power base they see slipping away. You might need to ‘get rid of the old stuff’ so

you can begin to make progress. Sometimes, historical issues need to be brought out into the open so they don’t prevent the partners from moving on to a new and better way of working together.

Accept that you will sometimes have conflict. Even the best relationships are put to the test every now and then. What’s important is how you use partnership principles and processes to work through and resolve any conflict, rather than resorting to traditional ‘blame and shame’ behaviours.

SUCCESS – WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

When morale is high and employers, the union and staff are motivated to make partnership work, you will see a difference in your workplace:

- People will begin to work together, not against each other.
- Less tension and conflict – the culture of the workplace will change for the better.
- A motivated, committed workforce and good workplace morale.
- Increased goodwill and camaraderie between staff, employers and the union.
- More active participation and a greater sense of belonging and pride in the organisation.
- Greater understanding and respect for the contribution each partner makes to the organisation.

👉 Did you know?

International research shows that workplace morale – a form of free capital – is increased in organisations with successful workplace partnerships. When staff aren't given the opportunity to participate in how work is organised and how they do their job, they give less than their best and may even sabotage the success of the organisation.

👉 Find out more

- **Maverick.** Ricardo Semler, Grand Central Publishing
- **Staff Engagement v Management Control – The Partnership Dilemma.** John Kirkham, www.theworkfoundation.com
- **Employment with a Human Face: Balancing Efficiency, Equity, and Voice.** John W Budd, Cornell University Press.
- **Achieving High Performance: Partnership Works – The International Evidence.** The National Centre for Partnership and Performance: Conference papers and discussion forum. www.ncpp.ie
- **Being More Like Ourselves – Smart New Zealand Enterprises. A study on the values and cultural characteristics of New Zealanders at work.** The Growth and Innovation Advisory Board. www.giab.govt.nz

The Partnership Resource Centre's case studies on the partnership experiences of Asure NZ, Fisher & Paykel, and Winstone Pulp are available on our website or you can contact us for copies.

👉 Things to think about

Before you move on, here are some things to think about:

1. Are all the partners genuinely committed to working in partnership?
2. What's motivating you to explore partnership? Is a current crisis a motivator?
3. Do the leaders and managers in your workplace understand how partnership with the staff and union will change the way they currently interact across the organisation?
4. Do union delegates and staff understand how partnership will change their relationship with management?

👉 Moving forward

- Read the other Getting Past Go materials to learn more about partnership.
- Talk with the Partnership Resource Centre and find out how they can help and support you to move towards partnership.
- Take a look at the **Workplace Partnerships: Diagnostic Toolkit**. It will help you understand a little more about the morale and motivation in your workplace.

PARTNERSHIP RESOURCE CENTRE

The Partnership Resource Centre provides advice on workplace partnership projects. The Centre has a team of independent associates who have extensive knowledge and experience in industrial relations and organisational development. Our Associates work alongside employers, unions and staff and help them develop constructive workplace partnerships, improve partnership practices, or work through particular problems. Contact us to find out more about partnership and what we can do to help you.

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