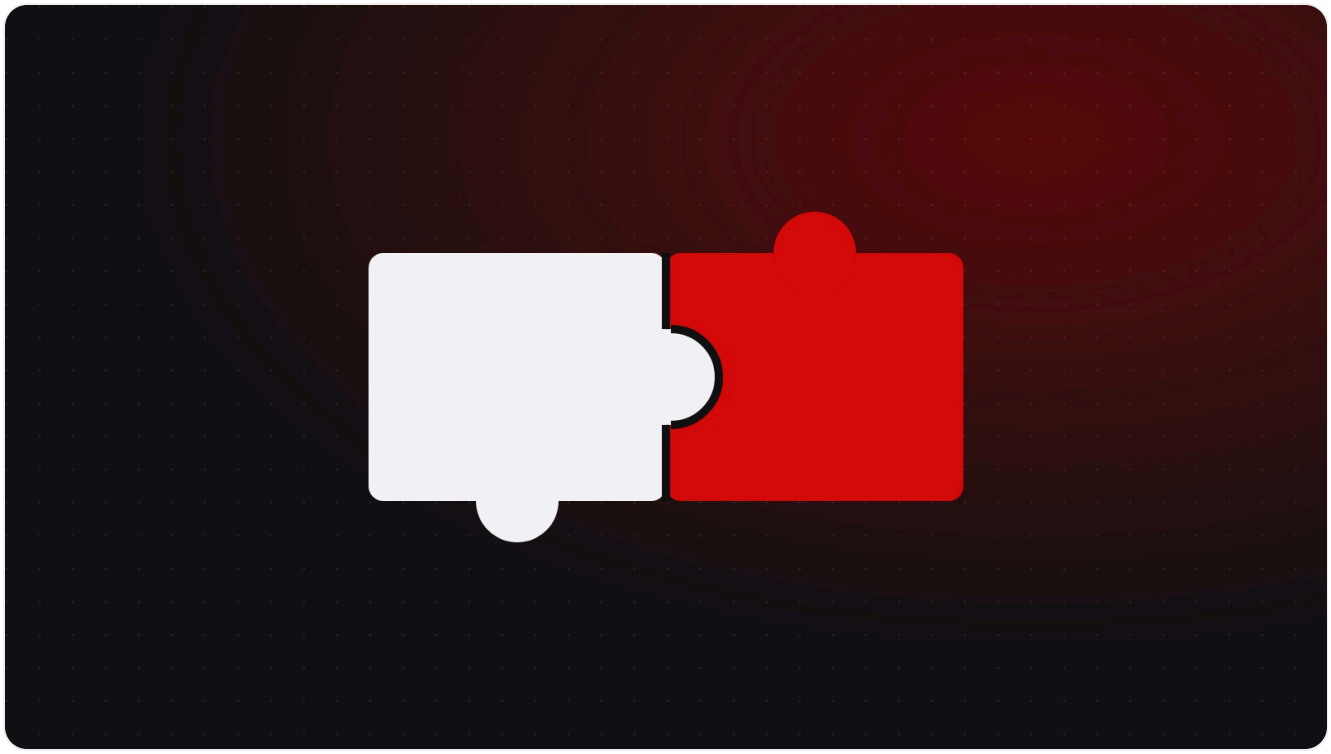
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Partnerships Are Never Easy. Here Is What I Look For.



By Tommy Lee



I was in São Paulo, Brazil a few weeks ago and we spent time with a new potential partner for Resource Global. I will say partnerships are never easy. It's hard. It takes a lot of work, and it frankly never goes well. I don't like creating partnerships, but I know it's needed. But because of a friend, I was open to exploring what it would look like with this ministry partner.

Here are some thoughts on partnership I was reflecting on from this trip.

Note: a good partnership is when two or more organizations stop working for themselves alone and begin working for each other. They share what they have, and in that sharing each one's work is made stronger than it could ever be on its own.



- You must get along and get to know the people involved in the partnerships. Do you like them? Do you trust them? Are they someone you are willing to work through tough times with? I sat down multiple times for meals, coffee, etc., just to get to know the leaders of the organization on a personal level. If we are going to partner, will our personalities get along? Now you guys don't need to be friends. It would be ideal, but it's not a must. But rather, will you guys be able to work together effectively?
- If you are going to tell me that you can't compromise on your focus to think about what a win is for me as a partner, then there's no reason to partner. This is NOT what happened here in Brazil. But I have heard many ministry leaders say to me in the past, "I have to be laser focused on what God calls me to do. I can't compromise anything we are doing. If you want to partner, you have to come and do what we are doing." If that is your attitude, then there's no reason to partner. You already told me a lot about you. In a partnership, we need to serve each other well. I must think about your goals and ask myself, "What can I do to serve my partner well and actively advance their goals?"
- Each person and group must sacrifice. That's all I have to say. Each one has to give up something in order to create a wonderful partnership.

- Don’t go too big too fast. Go slow. Build the trust. Do a few projects well together and create a rhythm. Then slowly advance the partnership. In an ideal world, you want to get to a Level 10 partnership, but it will take some time to do this.
- Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Keep talking. Keep getting to know each other. Run things by each other. Pick up the phone and talk through and inform each other what is happening.
- If it’s not working, feel free to end it. And hopefully, since you guys have been talking, you can have those hard conversations. It has to be mutually beneficial to be partners. I know donors love to see you partner because you can realistically do more together than separately, but if you’ve tried it and it doesn’t work, don’t beat a dead horse.
- Have the awkward questions now because those awkward questions will only surface later. Whatever questions, hesitations, or concerns that you may have now, talk through it.
- Talk with your team on it. As frustrating as it may be, have the people on your team vet it from all angles and ask questions.
- And lastly, don’t take all the credit. Learn to give credit to your partner. Talk about your partner and promote your partner. And find a partner who will also do the same thing as well.

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