

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS: A FIVE STEP GUIDE

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Mercy Corps AgriFin, The World Bank and Dalberg conducted research with the aim to understand how partnership engagements for technology platforms can be effectively forged and managed to create mutually beneficial partnerships.

Alliances and partnerships have always been part of human history. Organizations have worked and continue to work together for mutual benefit. Globalization has increased the need for and accelerated the growth of partnerships as the physical business space increases. Partnerships seek to share information and risks, and leverage resources including knowledge and technology.

The need to take advantage of technology as a global business enabler has seen the emergence of numerous digital technology platforms. However, owners and manager of the digital technology platforms face challenges in attracting prospective partners and forming sustainable partnerships. In this context, Mercy Corps AgriFin, The World Bank and Dalberg conducted research to better understand how partnerships for utilizing digital technology platforms can be managed.

The research came up with a five-point guide to forming effective and sustainable partnerships in the utilization of digital technology platforms.

Step 1. Profiling prospective partners

Understanding the prospective partners and their contribution to the partnership for a win-win partnership is essential to the success of any partnership. The contribution of prospective partners can be understood better if profiled within the context of partnership ecosystem as opposed to focusing on a few items on a checklist e.g. organization's good standing, shareholders of the organization, financial information, product lines or services etc. The leader should exercise due diligence to ensure that the objectives of the potential partners are aligned as an incentive for committing to the partnership.

Step 2. Demonstrate the value proposition

Partnerships are formed to add value that is mutually beneficial to the parties involved, resulting in win-win situations for all. It is critical to demonstrate the benefits accruing to the partners. The demonstration should show that the benefits will be accrued within the partners' existing objectives and the capabilities since platforms should enhance the operations of users and change their objectives. The benefits should be worth the investments to make financial sense.

Step 3. Proof the value proposition

"What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence."-Christopher Hitchens

Provide evidence that the platform will address the needs of the partners efficiently especially in the face of competition. When pitching to prospective partners, it is critical to collect evidence, package it to fit the circumstances of the targeted partners and disseminate it in ways that are easy to access and comprehend.

Step 4. Draw the terms of engagement

Fostering mutually beneficial partnerships is essential to a successful partnership because it ensures that both parties are committed to achieving the partnership goals. Consider establishing clear and unambiguous partnership terms that are mutually beneficial, as well as ensuring the partnership terms are sustainable for both parties. An important element of partnerships' terms of engagement is ways of resolving disagreements that are common in human interactions. The terms of engagement should be drawn consultatively involving all the partners as a way of cultivating ownership and thus commitment of the partners.

Step 5. Partner onboarding

In this final stage, clear partner responsibilities, timelines, and feedback loops are established to operationalize the partnership. Partner expectations are noted and resulting results laid out to set the stage for a smooth implementation.

Summary



As the partnership develops, the implementation of these five steps will frequently necessitate flexibility. Every relationship has unique characteristics depending on previous experience of the partners, implementation strategy in place and emerging trends. The steps identified are prerequisites for initiating discussions about how to change long-standing practices and mindsets.

The steps outlined above can also be used to attract partners to a platform. That is, by providing a clear understanding of what your platform offers; developing the platform's value proposition, what partnerships are being sought; demonstrating the platform's effectiveness through evidence; defining partnership terms; and easing partner onboarding.

An emphasis on clarity, proactive management, accountability, and agility can not only extend the lifespan of a partnership, but also assist organizations in developing their capability to scale and adapt to emerging trends.

For more information, reach out to skaranja@mercycorps.org.

If you want to find out more about our work, or are interested in collaborating, please get in touch!



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