

Developing Global Partnerships – Building Healthy Relationships

Basic Assumptions:

The definition of “health” is relative and may look different to various individuals, cultures, churches, organizations, partnerships, etc. In addition, relationships will look different depending on many variables (i.e. cultures, resources, languages, etc.).

This paper will use the following definition of building healthy relationships:

*The ability of two or more entities mutually working together
for a common Christo-centric vision.*

Keys to building healthy relationships:

Assess the abilities – When entering into a partnership, it’s important to realistically assess your abilities and your partner’s ability. An unrealistic view of your reality or overly optimistically assessing the abilities of a potential partner can thwart the relationship before it even has a chance to develop into a healthy partnership.

Clarify the vision – Each partner has a vision and mission and reason for existence. Healthy partnerships are built when the two visions and missions can be infused together to do something that neither can do by itself.

Create and communicate healthy expectations – A relationship will never be healthy if expectations are never expressed. Undefined and unexpressed expectations are most often unmet causing frustrations or selfishness.

Encourage accountability – Healthy relationships require accountability that strengthens in times of weakness and encourages in times of success. How the parties handle the accountability will dictate the level of health to which the partnership can grow.

Be intentional to follow through – The process to build a healthy relationship means continually renewing the relationship and striving for longevity through processes and continual cultivation.

Keys to sustaining healthy relationships

Let grace abound – “We judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behavior.” (Steven Covey from *The Speed of Trust*) Understand that your partner will fail. Let grace abound. Forgive and trust again.

Go deep, not wide – The keys listed above take time, energy, and resources. The more relationships you attempt to build, the less time, energy, and resources you have for each relationship. Remember that Jesus often was closest to 3 disciples, close to 12 disciples and rarely was in relationship with many people. Do likewise

Plan trips around partnerships – Emotions are evoked every time one participates in a local or global mission experience. Opportunities for unhealthy emotional attachment for trip participants are created when a trip is planned to non-partnered organizations. This can cause division within the mission ministry and cause more work to create and sustain healthy, trusted partnership. Instead, invest the potential emotions attachment in current partnerships (or potential partnerships if it’s an exploratory trip).