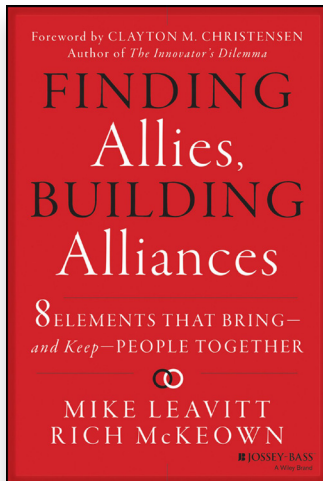


# EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### Mike Leavitt

Mike Leavitt was elected governor of Utah three times. He served George W. Bush as Secretary of Health and Human Services and administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. He founded Leavitt Partners, which advises clients in the health sector.

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Rich McKeown is cofounder, president, and CEO of Leavitt Partners. He served as chief of staff during Mike Leavitt's terms as governor of Utah, administrator of the EPA, and Secretary of Health and Human Services.

# Finding Allies, Building Alliances

## THE NUTSHELL

Jossey-Bass 2013

### Introduction

During our years running governments, businesses, and political organizations, Rich and I have participated in hundreds of collaborative networks. We organized a study of why some succeeded and others failed.

### 1. The Collaborative Foundation: What It Is and Why It's Essential Today

At its root, a *value alliance* is a group of participants with aligned interests pursuing an outcome with value for each of them. A value alliance is a formally organized entity following a process that has been deliberately designed to achieve a collective advantage.

### 2. A Common Pain

When people are motivated by their own problems, they discover they can find solutions by responding to the interests of others. Value alliances exist at the intersection of self-interest and common interest. Individuals become collaborators when they discover they cannot solve a problem on their own.

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## 3. A Convener of Stature

At its core, a value alliance requires a convening power: someone with the stature to bring together a group of independent parties and help them work in an aligned way to create something of value.

## 4. Representative of Substance

The top priority for conveners is identifying the right people and securing their participation in a value alliance. In most cases, these people are not only prominent people, they are people with access to resources, and what they say and do has the power to move others.

## 5. Committed Leadership

Indecisiveness often accompanies collaborate problem solving, and value alliances need clearly designated and committed leaders who will push, pull, or cajole progress through the muddle. Keeping these alliances on track always involves conveners of stature and committed leaders—roles that may be filled by the same person but are often held by two or more.

## 6. A Clearly Defined Purpose

Creating a statement of purpose, communicating it, and obtaining buy-in are absolutely essential tasks for value alliance aspirants. Without a well-defined purpose, collaborations drift into unproductive and endless discussions. The best purposes are *big enough to matter and small enough to do*.

## 7. A Formal Charter

There's a need for a written charter with a set of established rules to create stability and help resolve differences. A formal charter confers official status on the group and also creates the structure necessary for productivity.

## 8. The Northbound Train

People want to invest their time, money, and reputation on things that will make a difference. The phrase "northbound train" is shorthand for "Decisions that matter to me are going to be made and I need to be there..."

## 9. Defining Common Ground

Defining common ground, the eighth and final element of a value alliance, is often a predictor of success. Defining common standards boils down to the capacity of collaborators to reach foundational agreements.

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## 10. Collaborative Intelligence

Not everyone has a natural aptitude or appetite for collaborative problem solving. Alliance success is threatened when the people lacking what we refer to as *collaborative intelligence* (CI) participate.

## 11. Alliance Enterprises: What and How to Create Ongoing Collaborations

Some value alliances put down roots. People or organizations initially band together to ease the common pain. Then they recognize that the new network is great at solving present and emerging problems.

## 12. Collaborative Competitive Edge

The eight key elements of a successful value alliance can also serve as criteria to help you assess an invitation to participate in a value alliance.

- *Common Pain*. Until you can understand the value of participation to all involved, remain skeptical.
- *Convener of Stature*. The behavior of the participants will in large measure be driven by the environment of trust and reliability created by the convener.
- *Representatives of Substance*. If your evaluation suggests important parties are sending junior people, the alliance is likely to fail or have little impact.
- *Committed Leader*. If you do not see skilled and clear leadership, either assume that task yourself or stay away.
- *Clearly Defined Purpose*. If members are really there for different purposes that make the group's purpose too broad or unachievable, your participation is unlikely to be worthwhile.
- *A Formal Charter*. A critical element in the charter is the method of decision making. Consensus decision making encourages open discussion, active listening, and a search for right answers.
- *The Northbound Train*. If you doubt the mission as it has been described can be achieved, don't waste your time pursuing it.
- *Common Assumptions*. In evaluating your participation, think through what the most difficult disagreement might be and assess if the group is likely to break down in trying to reach consensus on it. If that is true, success is unlikely.

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## Conclusion

Freedom is the trust a society grants itself. It fosters collaboration and innovation. Heavy regulation represents the distrust society imposes on itself, and it stifles collaboration and innovation. Free societies possess this competitive advantage in the global marketplace. The value alliance concept will help them keep and strengthen it.