

Raising the standard for collaboration

Developing effective collaborative relationships through the implementation of BS 11000 to enhance business performance

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By David E Hawkins

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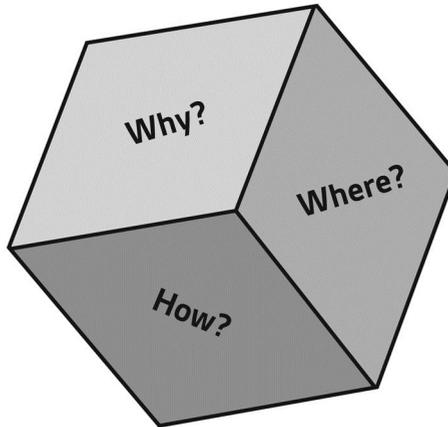
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About the author



David E Hawkins FCIPS

David has an extensive career in projects and procurement within the construction industry. For over 40 years he has been associated with the development and implementation of major projects in many parts of the world, which has provided an insight into the many organizational and cultural challenges that projects can generate. Over the past decade he has been an active promoter of collaboration and partnering concepts, together with the development of extended enterprises through the building of alliances.

As a strategic thinker he has deployed these approaches to support from manufacturing to outsourcing programmes, capitalizing on the opportunities within project operations to exploit global sourcing. Building on these experiences he has helped a number of major organizations to implement change management programmes in different industrial arenas including chemical processing, oil and gas, power generation and mining and minerals processing.

He was the architect and author of the CRAFT collaborative methodology and technical author of the British Standards Institution (BSI) PAS 11000 framework, the world's first collaborative business relationship standard. He was the driving force behind the creation of BS 11000-1: 2010

Collaborative business relationships – Part 1: A framework specification, and chairman of the BSI committee who developed the standard. In 2009 he was acknowledged as one of the world's top 100 thought leaders on corporate social responsibility (CSR). As an established author he has several publications to his credit including:

- *Sun Tzu and the Project Battleground: Creating Project Strategy using the Art of War*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004;
- *The Bending Moment: Energising Corporate Strategy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005;
- *Corporate Social Responsibility: Balancing Tomorrow's Sustainability with Today's Profitability*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

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Preface

The benefits of a collaborative standard

There can be few executives or senior managers in the global business community who would not recognize the importance of relationships as a key ingredient for success, whether these relationships are with consumers, business customers, key suppliers, business partners or internally across large organizations. These relationships are a critical success factor but also a major source of risk, where the benefits and challenges of interdependency need to be recognized to underpin sustainable business. The concept of working in collaboration is recognized for its contribution to both the effectiveness and efficiency of these relationships.

If you ask any group of business people how efficient they believe their own organization is, the response is frequently: 'Lower than 70 per cent'. If you then consider two or more organizations working together, the potential to enhance performance is easy to see. Collaborative working sounds worthwhile, but the challenge is to harness and deploy this approach where it can add value to the business. The potential impacts (both positive and negative) of relationship management are significant, but often the topic is not regarded as a mainstream issue for market development or skills enhancement.

Collaborative working is not new, but to a large extent it has been organically implemented as an adjunct to traditional business models. Evidence from across all sectors of industry identifies the potential commercial benefits and efficiencies of collaborative working for companies large and small, ranging from £ billion cost savings to £100 K operational improvements by working in a more integrated way.

While the fundamentals of collaboration may be understood, the time is now right to more effectively harness the benefits and move these concepts from ad hoc approaches to mainstream business operations. The pressures of economic stress, increased competition and demand for greater efficiency present a significant challenge to organizations in both the public and private sectors. To accelerate engagement, a common language and structure through a recognizable standard provides the platform on which to build mutually beneficial relationships in a rapidly expanding and changing business environment; this can be introduced at every level of the trading spectrum from small to medium enterprises

(SMEs) to multinational corporations and governments. We are seeing the creation of new trading models whose success is largely dependent on the ability of diverse organizations to work together. This new economic age, using the connectivity of technology, also needs to embrace the critical impact of relationships to achieve its goals.

The next decade – and beyond – offers a complex and changing vista of relationship challenges as globalization and technology draw the business world closer, while increasing the risk of conflict on many levels. There is clearly a significant role for relationship management: it must focus on quality in maintaining performance of people and products, together with supporting the organizational change that will be necessary to deliver the new business models.

BS 11000-1: 2010 provides a platform to build capability in a changing world. In this dynamic environment, agility, flexibility and collaboration are key ingredients to maintain competitive advantage. Adopting a structured approach will accelerate engagement and effectiveness.

David E Hawkins

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Introduction

Aim of this book

The aim of this book is to introduce readers to a broader perspective of relationship management (collaborative working) and to encourage senior executives to consider how their organizations can better exploit its potential. The emergence of the national standard BS 11000-1: 2010, driven by both UK and multinational organizations, provides a foundation to take advantage of the benefits of working with external organizations to build alternative business models. Companies that combine resources and capabilities can develop new competitive and cost-effective value propositions, reducing operating costs and risk while enhancing market competitiveness.

The approach in this book is to investigate collaboration from three perspectives:

- **Why?** Looking at the benefits of a collaborative standard, opportunities and risks in the context of collaborative working and how this can support a business development strategy that positions relationships to maximum effect;
- **How?** Exploring the benefits, structure and implementation of BS 11000 to provide a robust framework for collaborative working to ensure a sustainable business;
- **Where?** To explore the potential applications of the approach in ensuring the creation of business value.

BS 11000 provides a platform to build capability in a changing world. This book has been created to help those seeking to enhance their collaborative capability and establish the foundations to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The intention of the book is to help readers to understand what makes some collaborations work and not others – up to 80 per cent of all collaborations fail because of unclear expectations and undefined business processes that did not create an effective environment for collaboration.

Who is this book aimed at?

This book should be of value in particular to those whose remit is to develop and manage stakeholder relationships either within large multinational organizations or external to those organizations. The job functions of marketing and procurement in particular should benefit

from the subject matter but it should also be of interest to all those at director level in large organizations that require a more structured approach to relationship management.

About BS 11000: the benefits of a collaborative standard

Collaborative business relationships have been shown to deliver a wide range of benefits, which enhance competitiveness and performance while adding value to organizations of all sizes. The publication of BS 11000 is a landmark for business. It is the first national standard in the world to address collaborative business relationships. The structure of the framework is drawn from practical experience, which has been established over 21 years of involvement in relationship management. It does not represent a one-size solution, but rather provides a consistent framework that can be scaled and adapted to meet particular business needs. Collaboration between organizations may take many forms from loose tactical approaches through to longer-term alliances or joint ventures.



Figure 0.1 – Impacts of BS1100

BS 11000 does not enforce a single rigid approach but focuses on providing a framework that can complement existing approaches, where these are already in place. It recognizes that every relationship has its own unique considerations while achieving a range of benefits as shown

in Figure 0.1. For those organizations with well-established processes the framework provides a common language that can aid implementation and engagement. For those starting out on the journey, the framework creates a road map for development.

The adoption of any standard has to be balanced against the value that it can deliver to the organizations that choose to adopt it, whether this is for improving internal performance or to enhance confidence in the market. In this respect BS 11000 is no different from other internationally recognized standards such as ISO 9000. The BSI certification programme, launched in April 2009, establishes a measurable independent assessment for internal benchmarking of continuous improvement and people development, together with independently validated pan-industry recognition of an organization's collaborative capability in the marketplace. At a more detailed level some of the benefits already recognized by multinational organizations include:

- 20 per cent reduction in operating costs;
- improved risk management;
- 15 per cent savings through supply chain aggregation;
- improved delivery performance;
- enhanced investment.

The standard creates a robust framework for both the public and private sector, providing a neutral platform for effective mutually beneficial collaborative programmes. Its core value is commonality of language and application between delivery partners. This leads to improved integration and acts as a bridge between cultures to form partnerships by reducing confusion, providing confidence to participants and providing a foundation for innovation. As it was developed through pan-industry input it is not sector-specific; it provides a basis for broader adoption and engagement, a common foundation for developing repeatable models to enhance communication and engagement.

The standard is a basis for benchmarking the collaborative capability of organizations (both internally and externally) through BSI independent assessment, enhancing partner evaluation and selection together with establishing market differentiation. It creates a focus to promote customer confidence and more effective joint risk management, whether related to the challenges of specific programmes or to the relationship aspects of collaborative working. It reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings or a mismatch of objectives, constrains hidden agendas and reduces the probability of conflict.

The standard's structured approach facilitates integration of collaborative working within operational procedures, processes and systems. Thus it establishes more effective governance; it also speeds the development of

a baseline to support resource development and training, which increases an organization's collaborative capability to enhance the skills and ability of personnel.

In short, BS 11000 is a framework that will promote better engagement and effectiveness through strengthened business processes, while improving risk management, enhancing dispute resolution and providing a basis for skills development. Most importantly of all, it improves the potential for sustainable relationships that deliver value.

BS 11000 is the world's first collaborative business relationships standard, which has been developed from pan-industry best practice, recognizing the growing use of alternative business models such as outsourcing, alliances, partnerships and consortia. It can be deployed in any business context where successful performance depends on strong relationships and exploits the capabilities of two or more organizations working in an integrated manner.

The standard is unique in that it has an eight-stage life cycle approach for strategic development, engagement and management of business relationships from concept through to disengagement. Its sector-neutral positioning provides a practical model. It identifies the key principles that organizations should adopt to effectively build more sustainable relationships that deliver performance, innovation and create value for the parties involved. Its core benefits include:

- **efficiency improvement:** where organizations' business objectives rely on interdependent partners working together to achieve results, which in turn rests on their ability to jointly create a seamless delivery process;
- **greater effectiveness:** by working together, organizations are able to share knowledge and experience to focus their resources on reducing waste and duplication of effort;
- **improved engagement:** where customer requirements or market value propositions require the combined capabilities of one or more partners, their joint success relies on commitment to common objectives and thus speed of implementation;
- **cost reduction:** where organizations are jointly engaged in developing and delivering objectives, the standard provides a practical approach to creating a shared environment that allows costs to be optimized or eliminated through rationalization;
- **improved risk management:** where interdependent relationships are crucial in meeting business objectives there are significant risks. The structured approach to identifying and

managing these relationships reduces the risk of failure while creating a focus for joint management of risks;

- **enhanced performance:** by establishing an open and trust-based joint working environment based on a common framework, organizations are able to share capability, knowledge and experience to adopt innovative approaches that remove constraints on performance;
- **foundation for skills development:** as organizations seek to build alternative business models such as outsourcing, alliances, partnerships and consortia there is a greater need to develop skills and competencies. The standard creates a stable platform to focus staff development programmes.
- **improved systems and processes:** to exploit the benefits of collaborative working, the standard provides a structured basis for integrating the key elements of best practice into operational processes and systems. This provides the triggers and governance for more effective collaboration;
- **consistency of approach:** deployment ensures that best practice is embedded in the organization. Thus effective operation is not solely dependent on individuals who may over time be replaced because of their career development;
- **sustainable strategic relationships:** adoption of the standard provides a platform for the benefits of collaborative working relationships to be developed and sustained over time, which maximizes their value.

How to use this book

This book provides the reader with a route map to successful collaboration. As outlined at the start of this chapter, it is organized in three parts, each with a different perspective: why, how and where.

Part 1: Why? This part explains why relationships are important; outlines the growth of collaboration and its main characteristics; examines risk and relationships; discusses the impact of organizational culture; explains how trust in collaborative relationships is developed; describes the challenges of leadership in a collaborative setting; and discusses how relationships should be positioned for maximum benefit. Checklists at the end of each chapter in this part help you to identify your organization's readiness to move forward; they are drawn from BS 11000 checklists.

Part 2: How? This part provides a practical step-by-step route map to implementation of the standard. It introduces BS 11000, explains how to raise awareness of the business case and benefits of BS 11000; describes how to obtain the required organizational knowledge; discusses internal

assessments of readiness to adopt the standard; advises on partner selection; discusses the practicalities of working together; and highlights the importance of an exit strategy. Key messages and checklists are provided at the end of each chapter in this part.

Part 3: Where? This part explores the various ways in which collaborative arrangements can add value, both now and in the future. It discusses customer engagement, supply chains, outsourcing, collaborative contracting, alliance modelling and collaborative maturity. Subsequent chapters in this part explore new scenarios for collaboration: mergers and acquisitions; SME collaborative clusters; collaborating for sustainability; and the third sector. This part concludes with a forward look to the future of collaboration.

PART 1: Why?

Chapter 1 – The importance of relationships

This chapter explains the importance of relationships in business as a crucial aspect of sustainable success. Most people in the business community (both public and private sector) will appreciate that relationships are central to developing, performing and maintaining effective operations. It is the interaction of relationships between organizations that creates the dynamics of business.

Business relationships are often given lower priority than processes and systems, on the assumption that individuals already have the right characteristics for developing and sustaining good relationships. In many cases key relationships are linked to people and do not take account of the overarching culture of the company. But can organizations afford to have such a critical aspect of success left solely to individuals or should relationship management be embedded in their operations?

Operational performance is often separated from either customer or supply engagement, due to policies and processes. Front-line support will often be established and measured against service level performance rather than outcomes. This focus on contractual compliance in intercompany relationships creates a culture that is based on 'contracting for failure' where the foundation is to establish the boundaries for potential failure and litigation. And a focus on processes will inadvertently create negative compliance, where adherence to procedures overrides outcomes.

Effective risk management has always been a major consideration for business, where the development of value propositions is accompanied by appropriate risk mitigation. But it is rare for businesses to realize that relationships are perhaps one of the principal risks that they must manage. In the last decade or two there has been a significant shift towards alternative business models such as outsourcing, alliances, consortia, partnerships and joint ventures focused on developing integrated solutions. These complex business models encompass a high

degree of interdependency where successful outcomes depend on the ability of organizations to work in an integrated way. The vulnerability of these ventures is frequently due to their failure to build effective relationships.

Customers today are seeking to divest themselves of non-core activities, or obtain more complex solutions, through outsourcing programmes that frequently have a direct interface with end-users or consumers. Supply chain performance and dependability have become an integral aspect of performance; third parties are now a critical aspect of building value propositions. Many organizations claim to be totally focused on customer satisfaction with supply chain management that is developed around building robust relationships. However, the challenge for these organizations is to evaluate how their approach to performance works in practice and the incentivization schemes they deploy to motivate their personnel, which may be less about building relationships and more about short-term gains. The problem is compounded when organizations work together: many organizations operate at less than 70 per cent efficiency and when working together with others their effectiveness is reduced further. Despite the advances of technology, it is still people that make an organization function; it is reasonable to assume that the relationships they form are a critical success factor that is important to all stakeholders.

Key corporate issues for relationship management

The following section highlights some of these aspects in more detail, with a view to challenging the reader to consider whether their organization has the appropriate corporate focus on its relationship management capability.

Strategy and leadership

Collaboration will make a business strategy vulnerable if the strength of relationships and organizational or cultural compatibility are not considered adequately, thus putting business propositions in danger of failure.

Risk management

Risk is most often categorized by financial, performance, safety and external events, whether natural or social/political. Yet the most likely risk for any business is the breakdown of relationships with customers, partners or suppliers.

Value creation

Effective relationships are crucial to unlocking the potential within the value chain. But organizations frequently ignore the hidden benefits of sharing process improvements, skills development, product enhancement and performance towards overall competitiveness.

Knowledge management

At the heart of most relationship issues is the concept of ‘knowledge is power’. This is the main barrier to benefiting from the value of interaction between organizations; it is a failure to build up a level of trust to ensure that knowledge is exploited for mutual benefit.

People, behaviours and trust

The challenge in all business relationships is people and how they are managed, measured, incentivized and rewarded. Despite organizations investing in skills development programmes and cultural initiatives, the conflict of policies and process will drive individuals to adapt their level of commitment, enthusiasm and engagement.

Internal relationships

Internal boundaries and divisions may not only impede external relationships; they also have the capacity to undermine collective performance through incompatible agendas and performance criteria. The way in which individual elements of a business are measured will have a significant impact on how these elements work together as a whole. And as business ventures become more complex, so their internal capacity to harmonize cross-functional activities faces increased pressure and stress on overall performance.

Relationship management engagement areas

In helping organizations to integrate, these key principles are common across most types of business relationships. It is equally important to consider these impacts in a variety of trading, operational and business environments. In doing so it is hoped that the reader will start to consider where a more integrated collaborative approach (and perhaps the application of BS 11000) could bring additional value or security to their projected outcomes. These principles are addressed in greater detail in Part 3.

Customer engagement

The challenge is to be recognized as a preferred provider in the relevant

sector or service. As customers' needs become more complex, so the need for both horizontal and vertical relationships becomes a crucial element of success.

Supply chain optimization

It is common to find 50 per cent to 80 per cent of operational cost being channelled through the supply chain; with such a high cost, supplier development and integrity is a critical dimension in terms of competitiveness and performance.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing approaches have become an accepted aspect of business, which means that external organizations are moving inside operational boundaries or firewalls to become part of the overall delivery process. These providers' remote locations mean they are not physically absorbing the customer's ethos or culture and may be operating with different and conflicting values.

International relationships

Operating across national boundaries increases complexity; those who operate in a global market will be acutely aware of the challenges thrown up by cultural differences, whether national, regional or corporate. Differences in national traits are highlighted and it takes time to build effective relationships that really deliver.

SME collaborative clusters

For small to medium enterprises (SMEs), competition and an increasing focus on economies of scale has widened the gulf between the multinationals and the smaller local companies. Collaborative clusters of SMEs are forming, to enable them to compete with the larger companies. They are taking advantage of the opportunities and benefits that may be exploited through collaborative approaches to create competitive edge.

Corporate social responsibility

There can be few board meetings today that do not address their current corporate social responsibility (CSR) profile. There is a difficult balance between the corporate drivers of competitiveness, shareholder value and sustainability. The practical implications of ignoring sustainability issues, either directly or indirectly, together with the pressures of balancing the demands of regulators, customers, consumers and pressure groups, has become very complex. Today CSR embraces corporate governance, ethical trading, human rights, environmental impact, and regulation etc.

Partnerships, alliances, consortia and joint ventures

The blending of different business processes, cultures, incentive schemes and performance measurement across a chain of partners (or other alliances) can create potential conflict and lost efficiency. Relationships become a critical aspect of their potential for success.

Mergers and acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions depend on operational fit and also on the ability of organizations to harness and optimize their combined capability. While mergers and acquisitions are arguably the quickest way to grow a company they can be risky, when considering the investment and rationalization cost. Anecdotal evidence suggests that 85 per cent of mergers and acquisitions are failures; an important aspect that is missing is analysis of the organizations' cultural compatibility in their approach to relationships to drive success.

Third sector

For many years the voluntary (third) sector has been providing services, whether for social outcomes or emergency relief. More recently governments have taken a more proactive approach in seeking to harness the skills and resources of voluntary organizations. Relationships between local government, industry partners and the voluntary organizations will need to be developed to avoid potential culture clash, because the motivations and principles of each can be very different.

Developing relationships

Relationships of any kind have a life cycle; to maximize the benefits it is important to consider the longer-term implications of our actions on the value-creating potential to deliver improved performance. This can be considered at three levels: the strategic intent, the engagement process and the ongoing management. Every relationship is different, whether vertical or horizontal; however, the key issues will be common to most. It is these key factors that BS 11000 captures and thus provides a common and consistent foundation for collaboration. Establishing the right platform on which to create a relationship is crucial; while there is clearly a need for a contract it is equally important to jointly set out an appropriate governance model that will support collaborative working. Table 1.1 highlights some of the positive and negative impacts on relationships.

Table 1.1 – Positive and negative impacts on relationships

Positive contributors to collaboration	Negative contributors to collaboration
Executive sponsorship Committed leadership Early stakeholder engagement Integrated planning Joint government structure Open book (if appropriate) Clarity of objectives	Poor behaviour management Lack of stakeholder commitment Lack of partnering skills Lack of management support Lack of strategic direction Poor upfront planning

Relationship management plan Good communication at all levels Joint ownership of success Behavioural charter Joint risk management Effective information sharing Early integration of processes Joint skills development Joint change management Appropriate performance measurement Integrated continuous improvement Effective dispute management Joint exit strategy	Poor partner evaluation Failure to address cultural differences Lack of shared goals Poorly defined measurement Lack of benefit analysis High focus on risk transfer Hidden agendas Poor communication Ineffective dispute resolution Lack of exit strategy Negative approach to contract Lack of innovation
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Most relationships are multidimensional. They need to be recognized for the value they bring and the potential risk that emerges from failing relationships. More importantly, as alternative business models are developed it is essential that they are built on a structure that places the relationships above the individual and embeds relationship management in the organizational policies, procedures and systems. It is therefore important to consider what will drive the success of relationships and what may undermine them.

Evaluating relationship management initiatives

Given this background, it is perhaps surprising that the critical issue of relationships is often left to the capabilities of individuals, rather than adopted as a corporate ethos that embeds the appropriate characteristics. These observations prompt a key question: if relationships are important, should organizations be making greater strides to develop their profile, structure their policies and processes, and develop the skills of their people to drive more sustainable business models? Effective relationships will not simply happen because we want them to; they need to be managed appropriately to ensure they are a factor for success and not a cause of failure.

Conclusion

Relationships are important, so it is unrealistic to assume that such a critical aspect can be left to chance. It is also important to understand that while organizations can try to project a particular ethos, they are made up of people and thus partially dependent on their people. So relationships cannot be left to luck, nor can organizations rely on indirect activity to develop the appropriate behaviours to support that ethos. Far

from being a side issue, relationships are a fundamental aspect of business processes and a key factor in driving business success. Organizations should understand the importance of relationships and strive to embed both structure and leadership to exploit the potential benefits.



Checklist

The following checklist may help to raise awareness of relationship issues. Identify the key issues that are appropriate to your business operations to create a focus from your perspective as you move forward to the next chapters. Your response will help you to consider the next steps for developing a structured approach for your organization.

Table 1.2 – Initial relationship checklist

Initial relationship checklist	Priority		
	High	Medium	Low
Strategy and leadership			
Risk management			
Value creation			
Knowledge management			
People, behaviours and trust			
Internal relationships			
Customer engagement			
Supply chain optimization			
Outsourcing			
International relationships			
SME collaborative clusters			
CSR and sustainability			
Partnerships, alliances and joint ventures			
Mergers and acquisitions			
Third sector			