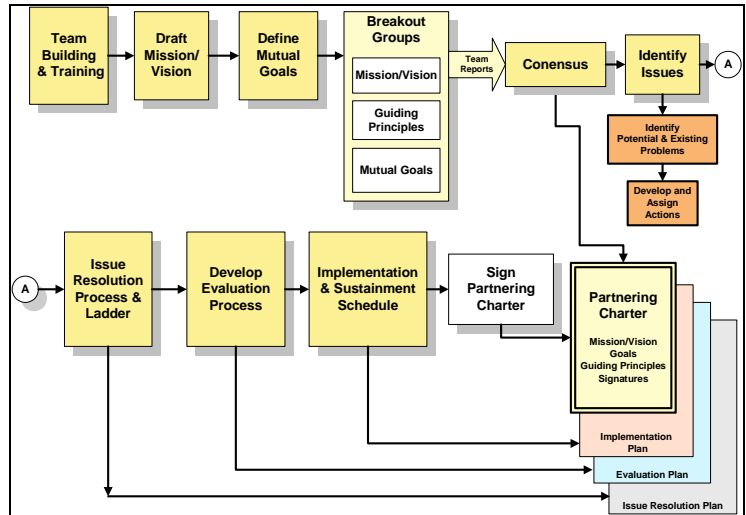


## Project Partnering

**Background:** Partnering stemmed from the Business Roundtable Construction Industry Study identifying the need for more teamwork on construction projects. Partnering as a process evolved in the late 1980s by the US Army Corps of Engineers and one of their contractors on a very large project. It was a stunning success and the Corps quickly decided to apply it to all their major construction projects. The US Naval Facilities Command took the ideas and followed suit. The huge amount of money typically spent on litigation of disputes literally disappeared on those projects using the Partnering Process.



*Practical Guide To Project Success*”, ABA, 1999 by Carr, Markert, et.al.

### The Partnering Charter Workshop

It is important to define Partnering because most of the time, when Partnering is said to be used, it merely means people are working together without a formal approach or it means it is a legal partnership or formal strategic alliance. Partnering for the owner is simply the confluence of the construction Partnering approach with the actual conduct of business between internal divisions or branches and those of the contractor at various levels. This approach tends to heal many ills that develop between the parties through assumptions and partial information. It enables improved productivity and effectiveness.

The vast untapped discretionary energy & potential of those who do the work can be unleashed only by providing the opportunity for their internal self-motivation. The old adage that motivation is an inside job is true. All employees have the choice of doing just enough to get by or doing more than ever expected. Partnering unlocks this potential because there is something in it for everyone.

Partnering, when done properly, causes people in the participating organizations to look out for the organizations best interest and they are happy to do it, while insisting on working together, happily creating better solutions to the inevitable problems. Management best practices

At its core is an attitude shift and alignment of purpose, team behavior and a focus on problem solution & prevention. The structure of the approach opens doors and promotes cooperation that might have only occurred through individual initiative in spite of the organization and not because of it.

The elements of Partnering are neither new nor unique. Partnering in the construction industry has been widely adopted for federal and state construction projects. It has begun to be accepted in the information technology industry and a few other industries. Partnering is touted as being practiced throughout the entire business sector, but is typically not a formalized approach as recommended herein.

A wide variety of definitions exist for Partnering. The basic definition of generic Partnering used here is from the Construction Industry Institute, In Search of Partnering Excellence, 1991, which states:

*“Partnering is a long term commitment between two or more organizations for the purpose of achieving specific business objectives by maximizing the effectiveness of each participants resources.”*

**Application:** Details of specifically how to conduct generic Partnering can be found in the book, *“Partnering in Construction: A*

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actually work when they are launched in a culture where communications flow easily.

Partnering is the tool, technique, process, and philosophy, which enables this to occur. The extent to which it occurs is up to the leadership. How long it lasts is also up to the leadership.

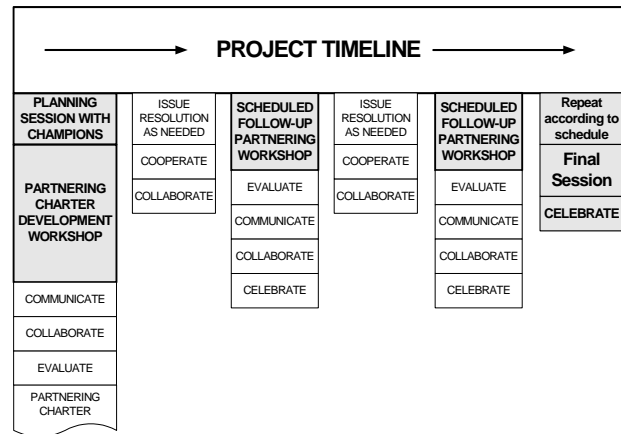
Success is better assured when the parties to a contract use an independent third party partnering facilitator to conduct the major sessions on a regular basis. The facilitator can be internal to some other part of either organization or contracted for on retainer or an independent sub-contractor. Without an independent facilitator, the project meetings will be business as usual.

An initial planning session of a few hours with the leadership team, including the Champions, is followed by a 2 or 3 day session (offsite) with the key players from all organizations participating. The Partnering team builds an agreement called a Partnering Charter that they sign and commit to for the life of the project.

Real issues can then identified using surveys, card storming and interviews. Teams are launched to deal with selected real or potential problems. An Issue Resolution Ladder is developed to resolve problems as soon as they surface. A feedback/assessment process is also designed. The implementation plan is developed to include monthly or quarterly facilitated follow-up sessions. These sessions address both the progress on issues/problems/goals as well as an assessment of how well the Partnering Charter is being followed.

The follow-up Workshops are crucial to making the Partnering effort be more than a nice 2 days away from the office, and nothing more. Top management attention, continuously applied, is needed to let everyone know they are expected to make it work. It becomes obvious when they know they will be reporting on progress at the next follow-up meeting and sooner.

The process is complimented by whatever additional tools the facilitator can provide. The Leadership team and facilitator tailor each



session to focus on what is needed most by the team and the organization.

### Partnering During the Life of the Project

Partnering is not a panacea but it has proven to produce better results, more good will and fewer frustrations than happens when it is not used. The organizations could be performing as well as all the management books say they could. Those books generally do not provide specific tools to use. You cannot build your home without the proper tools.

### Seven Principles of Partnering

1. Align Everyone
2. Selflessly Contribute
3. Be Trustworthy
4. Communicate Every Which Way And Often
5. Human Nature Rules
6. Synergize To Maximize Brainpower And Energy
7. Celebrate Often And Well

### References:

Carr, Markert, et.al Partnering in Construction: A Practical Guide to Project Success: ABA 1999

USArmy Corps of Engineers  
<http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cemp/c/partner.htm>

AGC of America, Partnering: Changing Attitudes in Construction AGC 1995