Reaching Across: Earning a Reputation as a Great Partner

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Constantly changing:

- Knowledge relevant to medicine and health
- Information and data volume, format, availability, cost
- Information technology & delivery channels
- Environments in which information and data are used
- User expectations & needs
- Government policy affecting all of the above
Constants

• Change
• Human Nature
• The Mission (if defined properly)
• Necessity to engage with others
Go as Far as You Can See. Then See How Far You Can Go.

Be ready for the next part of the journey.

Interdisciplinary, interorganizational teams see farther and go further.
Boundary Spanning
(as defined in Williams P, The competent boundary spanner. Public Admin 2002; 80:103-124)

• Reaching across borders, margins, or sections to ‘build relationships, interconnections, and interdependencies’ to manage complex problems

• -- individuals – build ‘sustainable relationships, manage through influence and negotiation, and seek to understand motives, roles, and responsibilities’

• -- organizations – create ‘strategic alliances, joint working arrangements, networks, partnerships and many other forms of collaboration’
A “Systems Approach”
Bridging divides requires Credibility

Credibility = Character + Competence

* and/or an effective “boundary spanner”
Practical Steps for earning a reputation as a great partner

1. Follow the “Golden Rule”, but aim for “Platinum”
2. Be prepared – have informed questions and ideas for joint action ready for the first encounter
3. Know – and be able to explain – the “systems sense” of your activities and ideas
4. Approach a potential partner with something concrete and probably doable
5. Communicate clearly; provide actionable input, reliable support -- and apologies as appropriate
6. Give – and take – credit
7. Practice “aggressive patience”
1. Follow the “Golden Rule”, but aim for “Platinum”

- **Golden**: Treat others as you wish to be treated
  - Immediately possible
- **Platinum**: Treat others as *they* wish to be treated
  - Requires greater familiarity
2. Be prepared — have informed questions and ideas for joint action ready for the first encounter

• Consider:
  • What your broader organization knows or has done with the group or on the topic
  • Relevant numbers and their trajectory
  • Relevant documents
3. Know – and be able to explain – the “systems sense” of your activities and ideas

- Context dependent
- A swiftly moving target – based on things outside your control
- Requires periodic reassessment
4. Approach a potential partner with something concrete and actionable

- Take advantage of “newness”
- Start with something obvious – a problem or opportunity
- Explore an “adjacent possible”

*Stuart A. Kauffman
5. Communicate clearly; provide actionable input, reliable support – and apologies when appropriate

- State the obvious – diplomatically
- Highlight broader implications
- Submit input where, when, and in a form likely to be useful
- Acknowledge – and apologize – for consequential changes in direction or miscommunications
6. Give – and take -- credit
7. Practice “aggressive patience” when it really matters

- Handle administrative details
- Volunteer to collect data, draft, revise
- Turn everything around quickly, even when the others don’t
- Watch the horizon and be willing to revise your strategy
- Recruit allies at every opportunity
- Keep the goal on your partners’ radar

“Successful leadership is more about influence than control.”

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The view is better at the edge – and on the bridge....

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