

Case Study



Client Profile

StoneArch Creative, a marketing communications firm

Realigning Interests in Partnering Relationships

Business Issue

The three principals of StoneArch Creative, a Minneapolis-based marketing communications and custom training firm, had worked together for several years. But the business had grown and their responsibilities had changed during those years.

"As we changed the scope of what we were doing, we were no longer connecting with each other in the same way we had in the past," says Judy Kessel, President at StoneArch. "We felt that our partnership needed help."

The Solution

Having read *Partnering Intelligence: Creating Value For Your Business by Building Strong Alliances* (2nd ed, 2004, Davies-Black Publishing) by Stephen Dent, they turned to his firm, Partnership Continuum, in 2001 to help them realign.

In the course of four intensive sessions, the trio of executives learned a lot about themselves and how they were interacting with each other. They admit that some of the things they learned were not pleasant. The executives believe the insights provided by Dent, an impartial party, helped them understand where they were coming from. The sessions focused on a holistic partnership aspect, teaching the executives of StoneArch how partners need to work, understand, and grow with each other over time.

Dent also provided partnering tools necessary for StoneArch executives to continue the process after the Partnership Continuum consultations concluded.

"We gained a clear understanding of our differences and similarities and a clearer understanding of our innate abilities and skills to be partners."

- Judy Kessel
President, StoneArch Creative

At the sessions, the StoneArch Creative principals learned how to:

- Interact with each other
- Be better listeners
- Give and receive feedback
- Deal with conflict
- Negotiate to reach win/win outcomes

Results

The partnership sessions made an immediate impact on StoneArch's partnering alignment. In addition, the three executives undertook a project to involve the entire staff in discussing the sort of creative corporate culture the firm would have. The staff indicated a climate of openness would be helpful to creativity, and the partnering sessions with Dent had helped the executives understand how to build trust and get rid of fear in the organization.

One of StoneArch Creative's specialties is onsite production of major national events and meetings for clients. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York City, some clients cancelled large events, leaving a lot of apprehension among the employees regarding the company's future business. Based on what the executives learned from Dent in the partnering process sessions, the management team was honest with the staff, explaining the company's plans and how it would move forward.

In addition, after the sessions with Partnership Continuum, the three ArchStone principals established the practice of meeting away from the office on a weekly basis to continue a strategic activity they learned in the partnership training sessions. The meetings begin with each of the three disclosing how they are feeling about how the partnership is faring. The meetings serve as a catalyst to nurture their partnership so it will continue to grow and facilitate their understanding of what the skills they need to develop in order to do what the business needs to do.

In the twenty-first century, businesses that develop, sustain and profit from partnerships faster and better will attain organizational success. At the core of any successful business are people. After all, businesses don't partner; people do. Developing the partnering intelligence of your people is what we do.

Partnership Continuum, Inc. mobilizes your relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, and even competitors in surprising and rewarding ways. Our unique and innovative programs and products lead to higher productivity and stronger relationships enhancing your partnering capability through building trust, positive exchanges, respectful interactions, beneficial outcomes, future potential, and leadership excellence.

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impact your organization's effectiveness.**
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