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WINE TOURISM CONFERENCE 2013

Partnerships. We've been told that to succeed in life and business you need partnerships. In this era of scarce resources, that's the case even more. There are many opportunities for partnerships in the travel and tourism industry but they take planning and work.

For a partnership to be truly successful:

1. It must be mutually beneficial.
2. It requires that participants discuss and agree on their roles and responsibilities and document them in writing.
3. Those involved should equally shoulder the duties and commitment.
4. Communication is crucial.
5. Mechanisms must be in place to evaluate the success and benefits of the partnership.

That's not to say that all successful partnerships follow these tenants. Some can work without all or some of these rules. But usually for a partnership to reach full potential these guidelines are important. Working with regional tourism partners in [Washington Wine Country](#) on projects like [Taste and Tote](#) I learned the value of these rules. So let's look at them more closely.

It must be mutually beneficial: All parties need to discuss how this partnership will be mutually beneficial. Otherwise it can turn out to be a subsidy for one participant and a drain on the other. Ask yourself 'What direct benefits to our business/organization will this partnership bring?' 'What specifically can they offer us in exchange for our involvement?' Don't accept 'warm and fuzzy' statements, get specific.

Agree on roles and responsibilities: We enter partnerships for many reasons. In the best of worlds there should be rhyme with the reason. The partnership should support your mission, and it should match your marketing/business plans. If not, think twice. When you decide to enter a partnership, act like an attorney when you write up a business partnership contract, agreement or understanding. Obligations need to be discussed, understood, agreed upon and put into writing. That way if there is a misunderstanding, there's a document in place to keep things on track. It does not have to be a big document: For short term, low risk partnerships email communications can suffice.

Equally shoulder the duties and commitment: In some situations the partners may agree to differing levels of duties, but the underlying point is if too much falls on one person or entity, the partnership may not last.

Communication is crucial: Each party needs to make a commitment to open communication.

Evaluate the success and benefits of the partnership: How will you measure the success of the partnership, both in tangible and intangible terms? Mutually agree on those metrics and again, document them. Sometimes things do not work out as planned or at all. In those cases the partnership needs to be reassessed, revised or abandoned.

John Cooper
President & CEO