



ULTIMATE
PARTNERSHIPS
ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PARTNERING™

8 PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERING SUCCESS

by Vince Menzione

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8 Principles of Partnering Success

BY VINCE MENZIONE

“My mission is to help technology leaders and their organizations to transform, achieve their greatest results, and change the world.”

Vince Menzione is the host of The Ultimate Guide to Partnering podcast and Ultimate Partnerships, an IT consulting firm focused on helping organizations reach their goals with successful partnering. With nearly a decade of experience as manager of partner strategy with Microsoft and tenures at partner companies, Vince’s wrap-around knowledge of partnership has uniquely equipped him to help tech organizations navigate partnerships for mutual and sustainable success.

Meet Vince Menzione

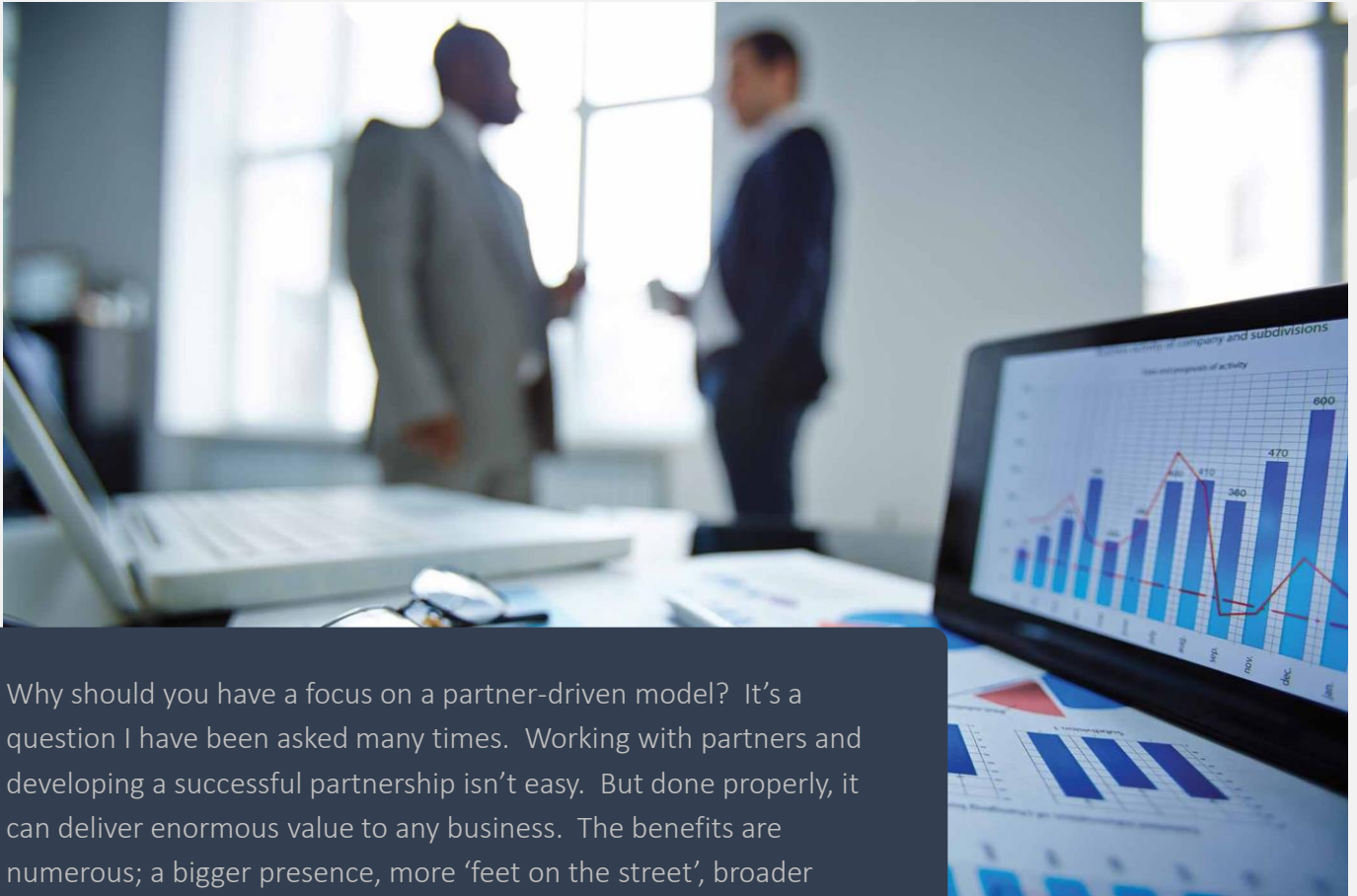
*Founder, Ultimate Partnerships &
Host, Ultimate Guide to Partnering*



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WORKING SUCCESSFULLY WITH PARTNERS



Why should you have a focus on a partner-driven model? It's a question I have been asked many times. Working with partners and developing a successful partnership isn't easy. But done properly, it can deliver enormous value to any business. The benefits are numerous; a bigger presence, more 'feet on the street', broader geographic coverage, an easier path into new vertical sectors and the ability to punch above your weight.

In addition, proactive partners can help you spot new market opportunities and move faster towards opportunity. This applies equally if you are a large corporate/manufacturer or a small business aiming to create a bigger presence by partnering with bigger players.

The tech industry is driven by partnerships. From innovation to reselling, companies big and small collaborate to bring transformation to customers. Heightened uncertainty and the pace of digital transformation has increased pressure on partners to move swiftly as industry demands evolve, with smart partnerships emerging as a crucial strategy. Yet there continues to be a lack of consensus, or even understanding, around what qualities an organization needs to build successful partnerships. This has been my focus for over 25 years, beginning as a general manager of partner strategy at Microsoft, and eventually as the alliance lead at a billion-dollar partner.

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Through my experience leading organizations, coaching, and interviewing influential leaders on my podcast, I've identified several core pillars of success for partnering in the technology sector. I believe these insights are especially relevant to Microsoft partners during these times.



My podcast 'Ultimate Guide to Partnering' is a laboratory for exploring the science of high-performance partnerships. We've come a long way since the podcast launched in 2016 with the simple goal of helping some 350,000 Microsoft partners position themselves for the tech transformation ahead. My guests and I unpack the principles of a successful partnering in each interview.

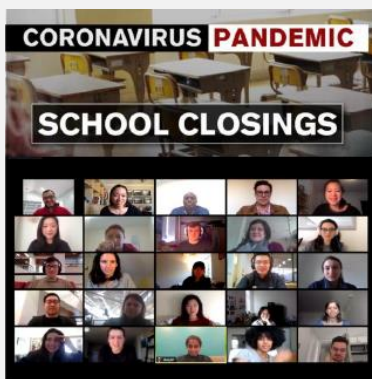
After Covid, my conviction is even stronger that partnership can accelerate growth and sustain survival during challenging seasons. Experience from both sides – as a Microsoft channel chief and partner to a tech giant – rounded out my understanding of what was required to make partnership successful for both parties, and my goal is to share this experience with partners searching for a lifeboat.

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Digital transformation is rapidly changing the role of partnerships

We've all experienced a rapid transformation to our economy, culture, and lifestyle over the past two years.



**Pandemic
necessitated rapid
transformation**



**Opportunity
continues to be
massive**



**Winners dance
with uncertainty vs
resisting**

The role of technology has been unmistakable as nearly everyone was forced to pivot to a world of virtual work and school, shopping and socializing. Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, captured the intensity of the moment when he [noted](#) that "we've seen two years' worth of digital transformation in two months."

There will be no "return to normal." As Jay McBain, a prominent analyst at Forrester, recently said on my podcast indicating that, [76% of CEOs today – in every industry in every geography – believe that their current business model will be unrecognizable in five years](#). Lightweight point solutions are displacing monolithic systems alongside the growing consumerization of commercial IT. We see glimpses of this in companies like IBM, Dell, HP, and Cisco who are jettisoning their services business or committing to 100% consumption business models.

Consequently, the partnership channel is also transforming. Influencer strategies are replacing resale and distribution and marketplaces are becoming more prevalent. As Martin Casado, general partner of VC firm Andreessen Horowitz, [recently wrote](#), "[Cloud marketplaces aren't just one more channel for selling software – it's becoming the channel.](#)"

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So if partnering is so common and so essential, why do organizations still struggle here? Generally speaking, I've identified 3 areas where partnerships fail most often. I refer to these as the 3 C's.



Culture - An organizations mindset, toward partnering plays a pivotal role in the success or failure. Shared ownership vs. blame, expecting too much without doing the hard work up front, "the heroic salesperson worship", accepting the status quo in business models. Lack of trust.

Lack of **Commitment** – Organizations that don't embrace change at the top or buy into the partner model; didn't make the required shift or investments.

Deliberate **Communication** Strategy - Not aggressive enough or deliberate in advancing the partner model in relationships, product, brand, go to market or co selling.

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8 principles for success in partnering

Organizations that succeed partnering have the following traits or principles in common.

Applying these principles is more important now than ever to advancing change and transformation during this rapid transformation cycle. Adopting the following attributes can help organizations big and small, across diverse sectors and regions, achieve greater agility now and into the future.



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1

Growth mindset

Building and cultivating a partner channel requires you to be open-minded, growth-oriented, and vulnerable. Organizations with a growth mindset reward risk-taking and a “fail-fast” approach to change. I call this Business Darwinism. But change is not easy. Building successful partnerships often requires embracing a different approach. During this time of uncertainty, realizing that partners can add value and amplify the message with an “[abundance](#)” frame of reference can yield positive results.

2

Shared vision

Stakeholder groups must agree to a shared vision and a compelling value proposition with objectives, result areas, metrics and milestones for attainment. Big, bold, and innovative, the vision and plan to achieve it must involve and inspire all stakeholders. Clarifying this vision will inform better decisions about people, strategies, processes, finances, and customers. Clear expectations form the foundation of enduring partnerships.



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3

Extreme commitment

From my work in and around the Microsoft partner ecosystem, I have found that organizations that “got it right” were committed to changing the business model at the top – having the right people in the right seats with an agreed-upon level of commitment toward partnership execution. In other words, alignment. For change management to be successful, every department in the company needs to buy in.



4

Consistent communication

Once your vision is on paper, ensure that every member of the organization hears it clearly and consistently. When everyone’s energy is going in the same direction, their accumulated drive will kick in and create an exponential force.



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5

Maniacal focus

Rather than boiling the ocean, successful partnerships often require stripping out complexity and friction to focus on the “one thing” that the two organizations can accomplish together. When both partners are aligned around a single goal, you’ll be quicker to find synergies and overcome challenges for greater results. Remember, a few watts of energy concentrated in one direction is all a laser beam needs to cut through diamonds.

6

Brand elevation

As a group, tech organizations have been slow to embrace the power of brand across their audience groups. However, brand and brand storytelling have emerged as critical elements to partnering success. What your brand is known for and how well you tell your story has a real influence on how internal stakeholders, customers, and partners like Microsoft approach their relationship with you. Only when the culture you built around growth-mindset and shared vision is reflected in your public-facing brand and amplified by brand storytelling, can it fulfill its potential as a catalyst for growth.



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7

Results-orientation

Successful partnerships are built around a clearly-defined process and set of mutually agreed-upon metrics designed to maximize results. Applying a co-sell methodology and operating model aligns sales processes and procedures and creates visibility. It also enables results to be tracked, shared, and evaluated through cadence and attribution. They drive the right level of traction to deliver results which, at the end of the day, is where the rubber meets the road.



8

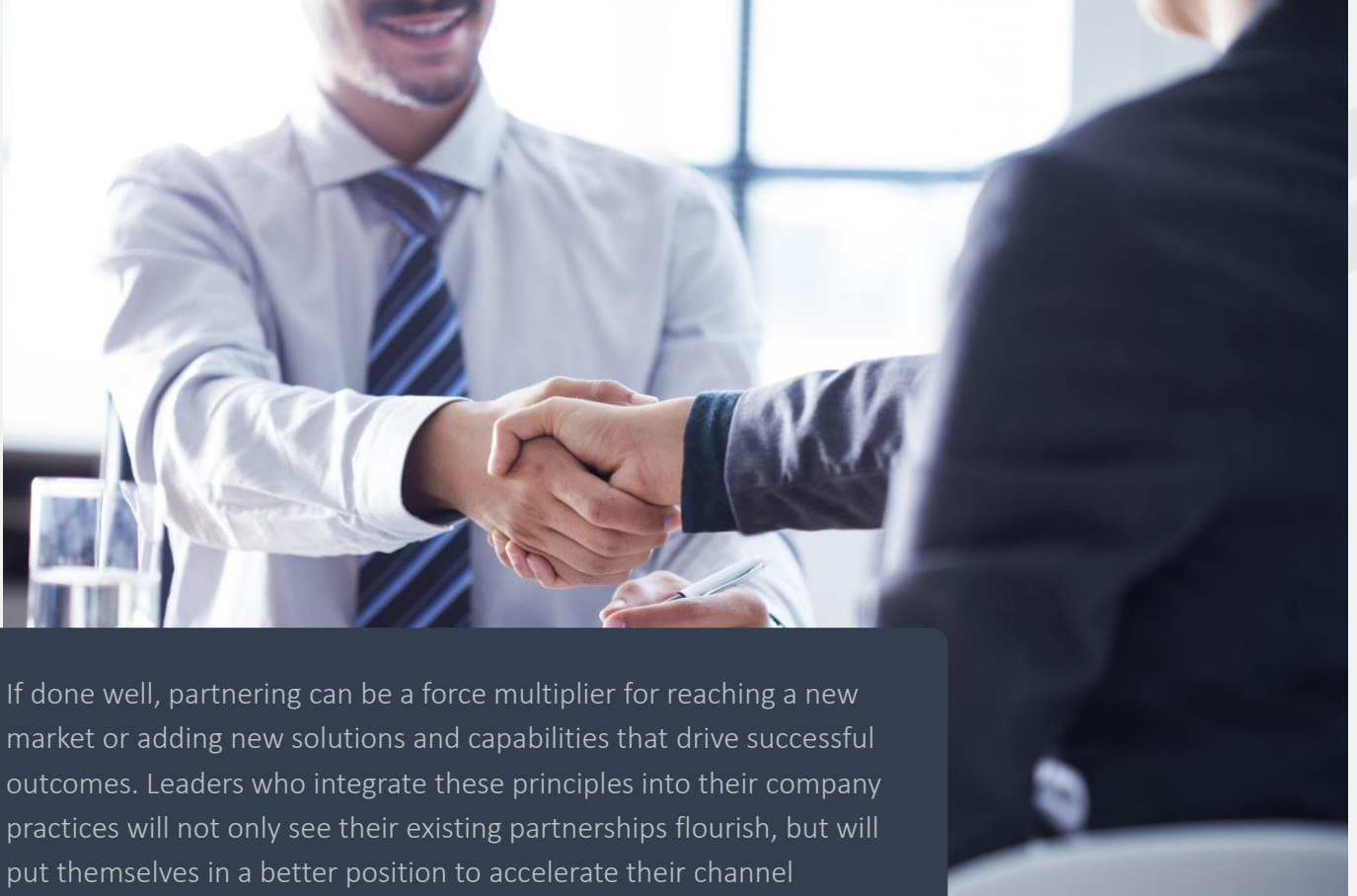
Agility

Achieving dexterity in business is critical in the current environment. One way to build this into your business is to explore new business opportunities through micro-investments and partnerships. A partner once told me on the podcast that “you have to be able to invest in a controlled fashion in areas that you think or ... know are tremendous opportunities that may be too early for anyone to have recognized.” A practice of strategic partnership allows organizations to nimbly test markets and business approaches and maintain the ability to pivot.



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If done well, partnering can be a force multiplier for reaching a new market or adding new solutions and capabilities that drive successful outcomes. Leaders who integrate these principles into their company practices will not only see their existing partnerships flourish, but will put themselves in a better position to accelerate their channel strategy as digital transformation continues to evolve every aspect of our lives.

If we have seen anything over the last years, it is that transformation is coming whether we like it or not. I firmly believe that embracing and applying these principles will help organizations like yours redefine what is possible ultimately leading to more successful outcomes for your business partnerships.

Together this will allow each of us to have a more positive impact on our world and society.





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