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Building Partnerships Across Sectors
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I'm here to talk about
How we work across sectors
And, I want to talk
About the Passion we have for partnership
And how that passion drives success

First, let me tell you about my organization
The Greater Halifax Partnership
We are a true public private partnership
We have almost 140 business partners
We call them investors
We also partner with our city, the provincial and federal governments
We have responsibility
For economic development in Halifax

Our partnership with the private sector
Is incredibly important to us
Not only do our investors
Provide almost 40%
Of our funding
They give us our direction
And
They give us our business approach
All our business investors believe
That growing our community
Requires their personal and corporate commitment

We focus our activities in typical areas
Marketing
Business Retention and Expansion
And investment attraction
We also spend a lot of time on
Research and Development
This function is about
Discovering how we need to change
To get better
We focus on some key sectors
But we spend most of our time
Working across sectors
On things that help
All our businesses grow

This approach as worked for our community
Halifax is growing
Over the last 10 years
Halifax has become one of Canada's
Great places to live and work

A place where a new generation
My kids
And my neighbour's kids
Want to live and work
And there's a reason for this success
That reason is partnership

So
Let me ask you
What's the most important partnership you have?

How many of you here are married?
How many of you didn't think of
That partnership first.
Don't raise your hands.

The marriage partnership
It's a relationship built on trust
And on common goals
Sharing
And don't forget
Fun

It works the same way in economic development.
Think of it as a pyramid
"The partnership pyramid"
At the top
The Partners themselves
The husband the wife,
The companies the governments
The organizations that get together
And draw up the partnership on paper

In the middle are the relationships
Relationships are what drive partnership
The glue that hold things together
In tough times

These business relationships

Like a marriage
Are built on a solid foundation
Of Trust
Of Common vision and shared goals
On shared ownership
Having a lot of passion
And
At least a little bit
Of fun.

To tell our story
I have to go back
About 10 years
10 years ago
Halifax was in a serious state of decline.

In 1996
Our economic outlook
Was bleak.
While most of North America
Was coming out of economic downturn,
We were still in recession.

Our key industries were in decline
For example
There were deep government budget cuts
In total
Over 8,000 public sector jobs
Gone
300 million dollars in annual payroll
Gone

This city lost more than jobs
We lost pride
And...we lost confidence
We had to change our approach
We had to get back our confidence

A group of key business and government leaders
Got together to talk about how we could start
Getting ourselves out of this mess.

So
We formed the Greater Halifax Partnership.
Bringing together
All the economic development organizations

In our region

In theory

These newly merged organizations would work
With business and government
To help Halifax grow.
But wasn't that easy
It was a bit of a shotgun wedding

So we got married.

We were partners

We were living together.

But

We didn't have the relationships.
Our community wasn't committed
To this new approach

We had to get rid of the distrust

Between economic development organizations
And between the business and government.

There's a 6-year-old book on leadership

By the Arbinger Institute.

It's called Leadership and Self Deception:

Getting Out of the Box. Read it.

Basically its premise is

That if you are blaming someone

Or you're blaming other organizations

For all your problems,

You're in the box.

Getting out of the box is easy.

Just recognize that you're in the box

That simple step

Gets you out

So how did we deal with our community's bad attitude?

First

We had to recognize that

Our problems

Weren't the fault of

Government cutting jobs.

It wasn't those bad people in the media

Saying negative things.

It wasn't that all the new investments

Being steered to other cities by

The federal government.
It wasn't other cities with better programs.

The problem was us.
Our attitude
We were in the box
Before we could make progress.
We had to change our attitude

First step,
Build a working partnership
With our local media
We did this
Then we changed the focus
Of all our advertising.
We changed from
An external focus.
Ads in national magazines
Trade shows
You know the stuff

We changed to an internal focus.

We looked at our major assets
Like the highest educated labour force in Canada
And we started calling Halifax
Canada's Smart City
We sold the smart city to our selves

We worked with media partners
Who shared a common goal with us.
That goal was growth.
Media partners contributed the ad space.
We created the ads.
We took out TV ads.
We took Radio slots.
We got editorials
We got ads in every regional magazine.
We got billboards.
We painted buses with our message.
We took out supplements in newspapers.
Every dollar we spent was leveraged 5 times
Thanks to our partners

And yes attitudes

Began to move
When the campaign started
Our business attitudes in Halifax
Were among the most negative in Canada
Today
Halifax businesses
Are among the most optimistic in the country

And when the confidence started to build
We noticed something
We noticed
That a confident community
Or a confident business
Seeks out opportunities.
It looks more attractive to investors.
It enters into international relationships more easily
And you know what
Confident communities and confident businesses
Just grow faster.
Across all sectors

Where has this partnership approach taken us
Let's jump forward 10 years

About a year ago
The Mayor of Halifax called me up
He said
Fred, Halifax has never had an economic strategy
I want you to write it.

In this strategy we took a very different approach
We did our work identifying clusters
And key sectors

We found that the high wage
High growth sectors
In our community
Were also sectors
Where we had
A natural advantage
Sectors like Finance and Information Technology

But rather than focus on a basket of sectors exclusively
We decided to focus more broadly

So our strategy is about investing in **people**

It's also about investing in **Creativity**
It's about **the world**
Getting to know us a bit Better
It's about having
Confidence in ourselves
It's about building **new partnerships**
And it's about having **the best business climate**
In Canada

So we focused on broad themes
Not sectors
The best example of
How we approached improving our business climate
We implemented a business retention and expansion program
Working Face to face with business
Solving business problems
One business at a time.
One problem at a time
Across every sector of our economy

We got involved with
Business Retention and Expansion International
An association of economic professionals
Specializing in this field
We partnered with them
We developed a solid approach
Then we approached major corporations
And government organizations to fund our initiative
And we partnered with them

Then we hired four account executives
To interview CEOs
And identify problems
Then we asked 26 service organizations
In our community to work with us
In solving those problems
We found 26 new and willing partners
And we partnered with them

We accomplished more with these 26 partners
Than we could ever do
With four account executives
Trying to do everything

The innovation here was simple
Talk to business across every sector

Find the problem
That's slowing their growth
Find someone that can fix that problem

The results have been great
Over the last 2 years
Over 1100 businesses visited
Over 2300 jobs created and retained
Over 600 problems solved
And a national award
For the best Economic Development Program in Canada

We solved a lot of problems
But along the way
We also collected the information
We needed to change
And improve
Our business environment

We took what we heard from business
And we began to meet with city government
To help improve service to business
Reduce regulation, reduce barriers to growth
Our partnership with the city was strong
And this worked well

Sometimes things didn't work well
When we hit trouble spots
It was usually because our partnership was weak
Take our work with the province
Initially they thought the information we collected
On business problems would be used to criticize them in the media
This is usually what happened
When other organizations served business
They were thinking about typical adversarial relationships
They were in the box

We were thinking of ways to support business
But we weren't communication our objectives clearly
So we got confrontation
Not partnership
In the box thinking
Not trust
When we recognized the problem
We fixed it
But it took a while

So we have had some success
And some failures

But the next years are looking pretty good to us right now.
Thanks to the power of partnership
In Halifax

Let me leave you with a few thoughts.
Lets go back to the partnership pyramid
A successful economic development partnership
Is more than structure
It's more than putting all your partners in the same room
Or even housing them in the same office space

A successful partnership is about people
People that have
Strong working relationships.

Those relationships have to built on
Common Goals and Values
Like we have with our media partners

Finding the Win – Win
Like we did with our 26 partners
In Business Retention and Expansion

Building Trust and Taping Passion
Like we did with our economic strategy.
Fixing problems by improving relationships

Today things are still not perfect in Halifax.
But we've come a long way in 10 years.

Often we get asked
Who is responsible for the success?
For the deals
For the growth in Halifax.

Well let me answer this way.
If at the end of each year
You sat with your husband
Or your wife
Or your partner
And decided who was responsible for every success
That happened

In your Partnership over the last year
Do you think that would be a good thing
Or a bad thing for the relationship /

All of us in Halifax
Are passionate about partnerships
And there potential to work across sectors
To grow our economy

Partnership changed our attitude
Partnership changed how others view us
And
Partnerships are growing Halifax

Yes we have had success.
More importantly
We've had a lot of fun.
It's been fun sharing this with you.