

6th State of Alliance Study: Social Capital & Alliance Performance



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PROFESSIONALS

Research Report Prepared By:
Shawn Wilson, DBA
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preface

The 21st century is the backdrop of an incredible proliferation of organizational diversity. In prior periods, it was common for firms to have similar systems, processes, and management practices. However today, even within a single regional industry cluster, the variety of different organizational combinations can be exponential. In other words, firms are becoming more unique.

This has been a particular challenge for strategic alliance professionals. Substantial credit has been attributed to the successful use of strategic alliances, thereby growing their popularity and usage. Nevertheless, coordination challenges trouble even the most experienced alliance managers. Although alliance managers recognize and seek to mitigate organizational differences with their partners, there is a great deal of inconsistency in the application and effectiveness of alliance management practices.

It is the contention of this study that the recent proliferation of organizational diversity has drastically increased the saliency of a fundamental factor that effects all strategic alliances. This factor is named social capital and it operates at the core of inter-firm collaboration.

This study first introduces the concept of social capital into the strategic alliance field and second addresses the role it plays in driving alliance performance. Successful strategic alliances return much more than positive satisfaction ratings with an alliance partner. They produce sales, market share, and profit growth. By using the concept of social capital, differences in these financial measures are made clearer.

I hope that this research sharpens the focus on social capital and thereby is helpful to alliance executives and their organizations as you seek maximize the value of your existing relationships while forging new alliances, in new combinations, with ever more unique partners.

—Shawn Wilson, DBA
Senior Vice President, Beaulieu Group



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