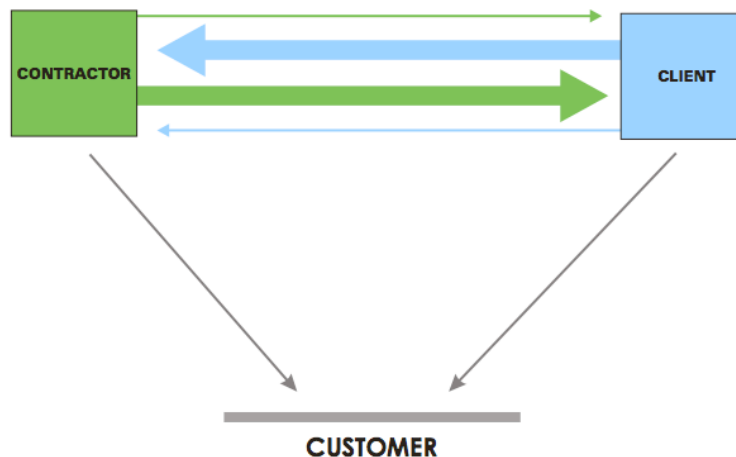
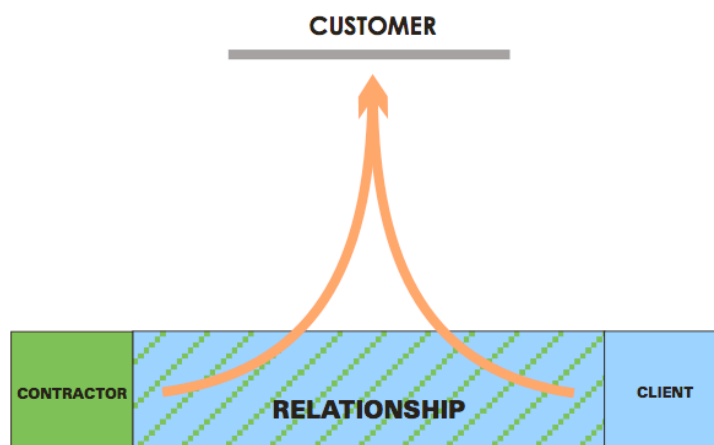


Achieving and Maintaining Breakthrough Relationships

The typical contract model below focuses on the contractor doing something for the client, and the client doing something for the contractor. The relationship between both parties is oftentimes adversarial as each party aims to give less and receive more. At best, each party gives an even amount yet this is a challenge to achieve. With this model, the client (and subsequently the customer) gains a quality service, yet this service is often at the minimal possible level and it is certainly not leading edge.



In the Alliance Model below, the contractor and the client are partners working towards a common goal – achieving the best for the customer (which is why the customer is at the top of this model). The relationship is a partnership with each party working together as peers. “We do things jointly for a common purpose” where the arrows merge into one to raise the bar.



In the Alliance Model, a Breakthrough Relationship is one which shifts from “Perform for me so that I can evaluate you” to “Work with me so that we can be successful.” A Breakthrough Relationship occurs when each party trusts that the other will always act in their best interests.

10 Ways to Achieve and Maintain Breakthrough Relationships

- 1. Create Breakthrough Relationships Within Your Own Organisation.** If you can't achieve breakthrough relationships within your own organisation you won't be able to with others. Have a healthy selfishness by improving things within your organisation to enrich yourself. The old adage, "You can't help others until you help yourself" holds true.
- 2. Identify the Leaders and Get Them Together.** Get the leaders from the contractor and the leaders from the client and put them together. They will lead from the front, raise the bar and they will model what a Breakthrough Relationship looks like.
- 3. Constantly Improve Communication.** Communication controls the relationship, the relationship controls the alliance, and the alliance controls the success. Establish some rules of engagement: Total candour at all times, respect each other's confidentiality when appropriate, inform each other of unanticipated problems.
- 4. Treat Clients Like Partners.** View the client as an equal partner and peer. Reciprocally, the client needs to treat the contractor as an equal partner and peer – this is a shift. The two of you are a team. "I do nothing for you, you do nothing for me." Instead, "We do things jointly towards a common aspiration. We don't seek blame, we seek cause. We don't relish activities, we rejoice in outcomes."
- 5. Take an Interest in the Client (or the Contractor) as a Person.** Have conversations about things other than the project such as interests and hobbies. Now you can't fake this one, but if you take a genuine interest you will find that your relationship and your trust becomes much stronger, and you will work together more effectively.
- 6. Focus on Your Successes.** No organisation (let alone an alliance) has ever had long-term success by acting from a defensive position. Successful alliances focus and build upon their successes rather than fixing their weaknesses. This does not mean you ignore weaknesses, but rather your attention should focus on improvements to your successes. Take time to celebrate your successes.
- 7. Be Bold.** Challenge, be provocative and take a stand. Remember that this is occurring in the context of acting in the client's best interests so be bold to help raise the bar rather than just playing it safe.
- 8. Fail.** If you are not failing you are not trying. By failing periodically you become aware of your opportunities for improvement, for expanding the envelope, and for growing and achieving together.
- 9. Change your Measurement System.** Most current measures are stuck in the adversarial contract model which weaken the relationship. Often the KPIs are wrong because they measure safe and easy-to-measure factors such as response times. Instead, shift some of the measures to more human factors such as customer appreciation.
- 10. Have Fun!** If you are having fun and enjoying what you are doing you will leave work less stressed and be more motivated to perform the next day. Having fun will not only strengthen the relationship, but it is one of your barometers of how well the relationship and the alliance is doing.