

DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS 2017

Great course, Great presenters, and Great participation

DELEGATE REFLECTION

Since completing the course, I have already put the learnings into practice as DIT School of Biological Science have signed a strategic European partnership with the Kerry Global Innovation Centre a global firm with a turnover of c€6.1b.

The threat of BREXIT is looming large here on the island of Ireland and I had an interesting exchange with a university colleague that I met on the course, forming a strategic alliance with DIT when/if Brexit happens; so even making this contact made the networking at the course well worthwhile.

One of my aims in taking the course was to be able to develop an internal business case to win the leadership team's support at DIT and to understand that there are different forms of strategic alliance that requires a bespoke approach and not a one size fits all approach. This means that you have to think 'what are the objectives', 'how can the strategic-plan deliver the objectives' and 'what tactics can be used to achieve the objectives'?

I learned: how to instigate appropriate activities by using different elements from the strategic partnership toolbox to support the development and nurturing of an embryonic partnerships. I felt that the course trained us on how to craft, protect and develop new relationships – on reflection it was like being trained to be surrogate mothers and fathers – protecting the relationship, thinking long-term, building trust, getting buy-in from the parties, being aware of dangers to the partnership; meaning you must be vigilant and alert in your approach being able to respond to changes quickly to protect the integrity of the relationship. Think like a Meercat coming out of its burrow quickly doing a 360-degree strategic scan of the landscape.

My takeaway was from Rebeca Santamaria-Fernandez one of the speakers who said, "the most important element of developing strategic partnerships is emotional intelligence" - I have learned to be the bridge between the college and industry, to never be complacent, never take the relationship for granted, to have my finger on the pulse of the relationship - to own the relationship, to be the go-to person when things go wrong, to think long-term, and most importantly to be honest as it is this that will help to build trust and integrity.

Building alliances is hard work – it's a jungle out there – as we know and so does the Meercat, but the rewards are there if the time and effort is taken to manage the long-term complex relationships in your own organisation and also with external organisations.

TRAINER REFLECTION

Developing Strategic Partnerships 2017 - what a fantastic course! I always say that it is the level of interaction and willingness of delegates to share their stories that make a course special, so thank you again!

Whilst it has only been two weeks since Loughborough, I'm already thinking about the next course. I had a thought-provoking conversation with the University of Lincoln last week where they described two major partnerships with Siemens in engineering, and Lincolnshire Co-op in pharmacy. Interestingly a key driver for both partners was a desire to attract, recruit and retain talent in the region, and the University is helping them achieve this in a variety of ways.

Reflecting back on the specifics of the course, there were themes throughout around focussing on the long-term benefits, building the trust that underpins these partnerships (first-off with your own academics), and being flexible and agile in your approach. Seeking strategic alignment both in your own organisation and your partner's is critical to ensure mutual benefit and long-lasting interactions. As Anthony Baxendale said, "you are a gateway, not a gatekeeper", be ambitious, be the communicator and the facilitator, look beyond the big industry players and beyond the money, and think widely about the strengths and interests of your institution.

Building alliances is hard work – it's a jungle out there – but the rewards of these deep, broad and meaningful partnerships to you personally, your academics, your institution and your partner are far-reaching. Good luck!