

vantage partners



Alliance Management Training Solutions

Vantage helps clients develop customized and comprehensive training curriculum that addresses the unique needs of all the organizational populations working on, influencing, and impacted by, alliances.

Differences between partners are essential to the value proposition of virtually every alliance, yet these same differences often lead to mismatched expectations, inefficient decision-making, outright conflict and, ultimately, an alliance that fails to meet its objectives for either partner.

Challenge

In an alliance firms choose to pursue certain opportunities in concert, linking their success to one another. At the same time, however, they remain separate and independent, pursuing other objectives - some of which may conflict with or at least present problems to the alliance. At the very least there are significant differences that need to be systematically overcome. This creates complications and challenges unique to alliances. Differences between partners are essential to the value proposition of virtually every alliance, yet these same differences often lead to mismatched expectations, inefficient decision-making, outright conflict and, ultimately, an alliance that fails to meet its objectives for either partner.

People accustomed to working on internal teams, or on more traditional vendor or customer relationships, are likely to find working with alliance counterparts difficult. An essential characteristic of an alliance is that partners share control and commit to working out their differences in a way that is mutually beneficial. Dictating to alliance partners doesn't work, nor does simply deferring to them. The kind of communication, influence, collaborative problem-solving, joint decision-making, and relationship management skills required for alliance success are in fact quite rare from the bottom to the top of most organizations. Figure 1 illustrates some typical training needs.

Illustrative Training Needs

Alliance Knowledge	Collaboration Skill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ State of alliance management across industries — alliance types, approaches to management, failure rates, pitfalls, and success factors■ Alliance lifecycle — the phases of an alliance and the unique challenges and best practices of each■ Governance and leadership — executive-level best practices for enabling alliance success■ The role of an effective alliance manager■ Launching alliances — approaches to getting new alliances off the ground■ Re-launching and remediating alliances — spotting and raising the need for remediation and approaches to intervention■ Measuring success — methods and approaches to score carding and relationship health checks■ Alliance capability-building — organizational support required to enable lasting behavior change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Fundamental relationship management skills<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Negotiation and collaborative joint problem solving● Conflict recognition, engagement and resolution● Effective escalation● Meaningful communication, including recognition of partisan perceptions and their role in miscommunications● Separating business needs from relationship- building and paying attention to both● (Re)-building and maintaining alignment■ Advanced relationship management skills<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dealing with especially difficult people● Adopting a joint contribution frame and avoiding blame● Managing the most difficult conversations● Joint decision making● Build, fostering, and repairing trust● Facilitation, mediation, and conflict intervention

Figure 1

Vantage Solutions

Vantage is uniquely positioned to assist organizations in defining and addressing their alliance training needs. We are the leading management consultants in the field of alliances and have been teaching organizations, governments, and international leaders the skills of collaboration since spinning off of the Harvard Negotiation Project in the late 1980s.

Designing and Implementing Comprehensive Training Curriculum

Most organizations today have many alliances which touch nearly every part of their business and require different levels of involvement and different skill sets from different people. Vantage helps clients develop customized and comprehensive training curriculum that addresses the unique needs of all the organizational populations working on, influencing, and impacted by alliances. Companies need to think about their critical alliances and business partnerships and answer a few questions:

- Who is involved and in what ways?
- Who should be more, less or differently involved?
- What does each group need to know about alliances that they may not?
- How do they need to behave and what skill gaps do they have?

Figure 2 and Figure 3 illustrate possible products of this thinking. Figure 2 shows how Vantage helped a client define its organizational training needs. Vantage first worked with this company to define the alliance competencies its people needed and the various alliance populations that needed alliance related training and then, with each unique population in mind, defined each populations unique needs. Figure 3 shows how this particular company’s training needs translated into an overall alliance curriculum. In this case, each course was then further defined by learning objectives, a syllabus, class materials, and customized role plays. Some companies choose traditional classroom training and some take a mixed media approach, relying more heavily on distance learning and e-based content.

Illustrative Population Specific Alliance Competency Requirements

	Alliance Managers	Project Leaders	Alliance-involved Individuals	BD and Legal	Extended Organization	Governance Committees	Senior Executives
Alliance challenges and best practices	Deep	Deep	Deep	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Alliance management business processes	Deep	Deep	Deep	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Fundamental collaboration skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving and decision-making)	Deep	Deep	Deep	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Intervention skills (e.g. mediation, facilitation, and conflict resolution)	Deep	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Alliance leadership	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Deep	Deep
Alliance governance	Deep	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Awareness	Deep	Deep

■ Deep exposure and intense practice on concepts and behaviors
 ■ Exposure and practice to concepts and behaviors
 ■ Awareness of concepts and behaviors

Figure 2

Alliance Curriculum — Learning Pathways and Course Offerings by Population

	Alliance Managers	Project Leaders	Alliance-involved Individuals	BD and Legal	Extended Organization	Governance Committees	Senior Executives
Alliance challenges and best practices	<i>Introduction to Alliance Management at Acme</i> — classroom (½ day)				<i>What are Alliances at Acme?</i> — webinar	<i>Executive Overview: Alliance Management at Acme</i> — classroom (½ day)	
Alliance management business processes							
Fundamental collaboration skills	<i>Core Alliance Management Skills</i> — classroom (2½ days)				<i>Core Alliance Management Skills</i> — webinar series		
Intervention skills	<i>Advanced Alliance Management Skills</i> — classroom (2-days)						
Alliance leadership	<i>Co-lead Leadership sessions</i>	<i>What is Alliance Leadership at Acme?</i> — webinar			<i>Alliance Leadership</i> — classroom (½ day)		
Alliance governance							

■ Intensive Track
 ■ Awareness Track
 ■ Leadership Track

Figure 3

Designing and Implementing Alliance-specific Training

Vantage not only brings the expertise and knowledge about what a comprehensive training plan should look like for an organization, but also the alliance negotiation and management best practices, behavioral content and teaching skills to deliver the critical elements of any alliance training plan.

As part of a broader curriculum or for a single and very specific alliance or joint alliance team, Vantage delivers customized alliance training. For the alliance team of a client company, Vantage designed and delivered a training program for the 15-person team of people with responsibility for the company's largest and most strategic alliance. Figure 4 shows the two-step approach devised for this training program.

This training program was designed with and customized to this company's need for an intensive program of face-to-face sessions building a set of highly specialized skills in a core set of people. In other cases, we lead several day-long trainings for all the parties from both companies in an alliance, or distance learning events that leverage technology to bring alliance knowledge, best practice and skill to globally distributed populations. We also provide joint training to both partners in an alliance, ensuring that they both have the skills, framework and vocabulary to work effectively together to achieve alliance success.

Alliance success depends overwhelmingly on the ability of individuals from partner companies to work well together, more or less seamlessly — almost as if they were members of the same organization. This requires an investment of time and effort to develop, reinforce, and reward collaborative skills and behaviors.

Illustrative Internal Training Time Line

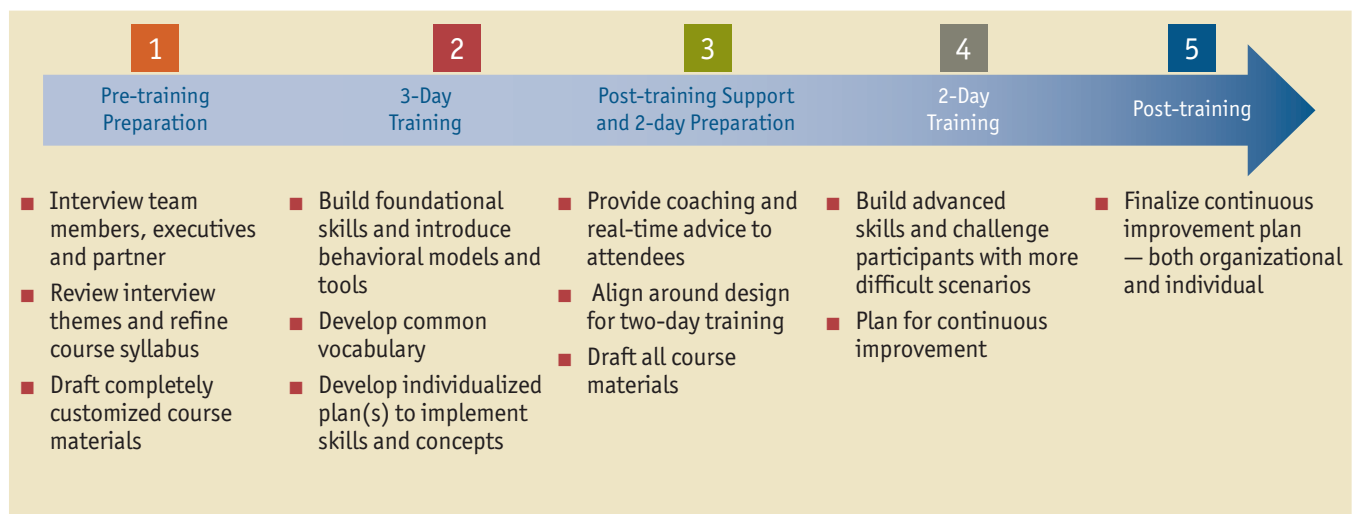


Figure 4



About Vantage Partners

Vantage Partners, a spin-off of the Harvard Negotiation Project, is a management consulting firm that specializes in helping companies achieve breakthrough business results by transforming the way they manage their most important relationships. To learn more about Vantage Partners or to access our online library of research and white papers, please visit www.vantagepartners.com.

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