

A Bold Next Generation for Alliance Professionals?

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Time to Rethink our Future

ASAP is nearing its twentieth anniversary. When we launched ASAP at the end of the 20th century, the world was quite different: the internet was still new; the idea of networks and connectedness was still a visionary dream; and for many the notion of companies forming alliances using partnering best practices was an alien strategy.

The Collaborative Shift has Gained Momentum

A lot has changed since those early years – a generation of old thinking has been replaced by a connected world where collaboration, alliances, and partnering is not just acceptable, it is *desirable for most* and *mandatory for many*.

Today, most every CEO is *talking* about collaboration, but, for the most part, companies and people are simply not very good at collaboration.

Taking Center Stage

This Collaborative *Shift* creates a unique opportunity for ASAP:

Our members all are acknowledged “naturals” at collaboration – we chose our profession because we aspire to work together better and because we tend to be predisposed this way.

Alliance Professionals ideally positioned to take “center stage” in the world of collaboration – if we have the vision and desire to take the lead.

What this means is two-fold:

First, we must not forsake our roots. We are alliance-oriented, which means we should continue to serve our core constituency. Networking, training, certification, and sharing best practices should be preserved and we can continue to improve as alliances become increasingly important. Entry level alliance managers should always look to ASAP for guidance.

Second, as our members advance upward in their organizations, they need to be highly effective in more than just alliances – think “collaborative systems:” anywhere people need to work together, especially across boundaries. Being proficient at collaboration means we embrace



Alliance Professionals are blessed with a very powerful quality: we all have the “collaboration gene”



– the natural inclination, insights, and inspiration to bring people together to produce extraordinary results. It makes us the natural candidates to lead the Collaborative *Shift*.

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engaging in a wide variety of opportunities and challenges, including internal alliances, integrating new acquisitions, cross-functional teams, high-performance organizations, complex program roll-outs, supply chains, and global business unit coordination, to name just a few.

However, like it or not, people stereotype us; too many alliance professionals are pigeon-holed in many other's minds into a narrow, foreign field. What's more, when we are labeled as "managers," the value of our currency is devalued because the name implies we think, act, and belong in the middle ranks.

Our colleagues see us on the "outside" of organizations (often not even on the organization chart) and in the "middle" operative rank (not in the C-Suite power structure).

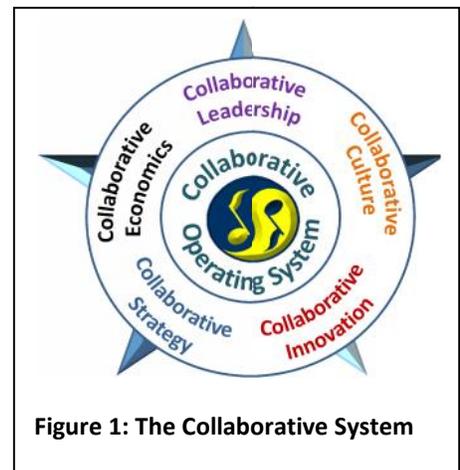
Bottom line: we are playing too small and narrowly – we must think bigger and bolder if we are to be game changers. For senior ASAP members, this shift becomes increasingly more important.

Wherever collaboration is required, ASAP's presence should be felt

Embracing the Shift

To position ourselves in the vanguard of the Collaborative Shift, we need to better define the realm. It is essentially embraced by a "design system/architecture (see Figure 1) composed of five basic areas:

1. Collaborative Leadership: the strategies, methods, metrics, actions, and qualities of those who are guiding others.
2. Collaborative Culture: the qualities of inter-personal/organizational relationships, including values, teamwork, and trust.
3. Collaborative Innovation: the capability to produce operational results and continuously improve to adapt to change.
4. Collaborative Strategy: the moves and methods to produce long-term competitive advantage in a value chain/network. (this is where the Alliance Professional is currently positioned)
5. Collaborative Economics: the means of measuring and predicting how financial value will be generated by the use of collaboration.



Each of these five areas are rich with content, practices, and leverage for results.

Mastering more Powerful Mindsets and Skillsets

The Collaborative Systems approach is far more holistic than strategic alliances. It requires our professionals go to another level of mastery – as Collaborative Leaders, shifting to a position where we can make more profound organizational-wide impacts:

- **From Alliances → to Positioning as Value Creators**
- **From Alliance Management → to Collaborative Leadership**
- **From Best Practices → to Collaborative Systems Design Architects**
- **From Operational Performance → to Strategic & Competitive Leverage**

Each of these requires a new depth of understanding, a stronger architecture, and better analytics. For ASAP it's more than just best practices; it's about *next generation thought leadership, applications excellence, measurable value, and top-notch results.*

A Roadmap to the Future

Shifting to the next evolution of our Association is something that will require a long-term strategy to retain our current base of alliance professionals, while broadening into larger base of people interested in a fuller range of collaborative capabilities.

Not moving at this moment in history means someone else will fill the gap, leaving us flat-lined.

This shift requires the Board to authorize a strategic assessment and development of a market entry plan with clarity about what our future value proposition must be.

A *NextGen* ASAP strategy should be well worth the effort – our extensive data on collaborative economics reveal a 25% competitive advantage. The potential member base would be enormous. The shift would help our member's careers journey while giving ASAP greater visibility in the main stream as we take Center Stage.

Building Capabilities

To accomplish this NextGen shift, several things will need to be done: A broader marketing campaign will be needed. Deeper collaborative content (strategies, practices, metrics, etc.) will be required. Alliances with many other associations must be built. Capability building programs that fill the gap left by business schools will be essential, as most MBAs simply have what's necessary to thrive in today's collaborative world.



**Collaboration
Central**

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ASSOCIATION OF
STRATEGIC ALLIANCE
& PARTNERING
PROFESSIONALS

Repositioning the Brand

We have spent a lot of time and money creating a trusted brand. We should not forsake our roots nor our image. But we might consider something that speaks more powerfully to a broader audience (adding Partnering to our name, with ASAP² and using Collaboration Central above our symbol).