

## CHAPTER ONE

# Be a Partner, Not an Order Taker

The lessons in this book may require you to make a fundamental change to your perspective on relationships and business hierarchy. Most people spend their working lives following orders, whether from bosses or customers. These may not be military commands—your customers may ask you in the nicest way possible to reduce delivery time—but they still must be obeyed. This is just the way things are, whether you're a junior executive or higher-level manager.

So here's how to change your thinking: Consider the possibility that you can have an equal relationship with your superior. Regardless of whether your superior is the CEO of a *Fortune 500* company, you don't have to perceive yourself as an inferior in that relationship.

Throughout my years of coaching, I've seen hundreds of productive partnerships among people of unequal status. In high tech companies, entrepreneurial CEOs and geeky techies work together like buddies. In more traditional organizations, senior executives and recent MBA grads participate on teams without anyone pulling rank. And I've also

seen customers who treat their suppliers with great respect, generosity, and empathy.

But unless the working culture breeds this, which most do not, these partnership relationships don't just happen. You've got to take a chance, put forth the effort, and make them happen. How do you do it? Well, a good first step is figuring out why you accept the role of order taker in the first place.

### **TAKING SECOND-CLASS-CITIZEN STATUS FOR GRANTED**

Do you accept your work relationships as they are, even if they're not the way you want them to be? Probably. Most people do. Reexamine these relationships, especially the ones where inequalities exist. Most of the time, these inequalities stem from your own attitudes and behaviors, almost as much as from organizational structures and traditions.

Don't be intimidated by conventional corporate hierarchies. While they do still exist to some extent, they are outdated and counterproductive. There's always going to be a pecking order, but that order is changing. In corporations around the world, title and seniority are giving way to talent and its impact. If you've got talent and can make an impact, your contribution will be recognized and valued. So don't fall into the trap of acting inferior to others just because you have fewer years under your belt or are making less money.

Even if you're a senior manager or executive, there's a fine line between cowering before the CEO because of his or her organizational authority and providing the highest value possible because you view yourself as an equal. This single distinction can make the difference in your career (but you'll soon see that it starts in your mind).

Easier said than done? Sure. But you can avoid this trap if you know why people end up in order-taker

relationships. If you are conscious of the pitfalls, you can sidestep them more easily.

There are four situations that cause people to accept unequal relationships:

1. Class separation
2. Unequal treatment
3. Listening imbalance
4. Erosion of self-worth

### **Class Separation**

In most companies, many factors exist that create a sense of inequality. This inequality can be perpetuated by the use of titles that divide people into two categories: bosses/direct reports, superiors/subordinates, customers/suppliers, executive vice presidents/administrative assistants. Experience is another factor—senior people tend to be deferred to, especially senior people with a long tenure. Education is also a factor—people who graduated from top MBA programs are too often perceived as *better than* those who went to state schools. In some companies, certain functions or teams have more cachet than others. And then there are those who receive the perks that clearly mark them as belonging to the upper class—corner offices, generous expense accounts, coffee with the boss, and so on.

### **Unequal Treatment**

People tend to define their roles based on how they are treated by their bosses or customers. This is a typical example for a newly hired lawyer. John begins his first day as a junior associate at a prestigious law firm, showing up at the appointed 7:30 AM time. Mark, his boss, doesn't arrive until 8:30 AM. Mark greets John who has been

sitting in the waiting area outside of his office with, “John, I’ve got a lot of work to give you. Follow me.”

The interaction lasted only a few seconds, but the impact on the relationship between Mark and John was huge:

- *Tone and pace:* Mark’s words and tone of voice said that he was all business and made John feel like a lackey about to receive his assignments. The cold, fast nature of the exchange said to John that his role was to obey without question.
- *Bad manners:* Mark didn’t apologize for being late. Nor did he welcome John to the law firm. Being rude tells John that he is so far down on the totem pole that he doesn’t even merit bare-bones respect.
- *Commands:* Mark asserted his dominance by his choice of words. He might as well have greeted John with, “Hi, you’re my inferior. Follow me to my office, which is bigger than any office you’ll be in for a long time.”

### **Listening Imbalance**

Unequal relationships arise when one person does all the talking and the other person does all the listening. Test this concept by thinking about your relationships. I’d bet in every relationship where you’re the primary listener, you’re also the primary order taker. Just as our best friends tend to be good listeners, our best work relationships are characterized by two-way listening.

### **Erosion of Self-Worth**

If you encounter characteristics (tone and pace, bad manners, commands) similar to those in the previous exchange

between Mark and John, you could begin to question your contribution and feel inferior. If you are being told you're a subordinate, if a boss or customer treats you rudely, and if this individual rarely listens to what you have to say, you may start wondering if you're worthy of equality. It's easy to slip into an inferior role if that's the role you believe you deserve. Keep in mind consultant Alan Weiss's words: "The hardest sale you will ever have to make is to yourself."

I'm going to teach you how to make that sale. It's worth making. Otherwise, you will constantly end up in relationships that keep you going nowhere fast. With that warning in mind, let's look at the opposite side of the coin for the characteristics of results-producing partnerships.

### IDEAL PARTNERSHIPS

Before describing what a true partnering relationship looks like, let me reiterate that you don't have to act like a lackey, stooge, or yes-man (yes-woman). Even if that is how your supervisor or manager treats you, you can change the dynamic of that relationship. I understand the skepticism. I had a psychology teacher in college who used to say, "In the ladder of life, we have a tendency to kiss the foot of the person above us and kick the head of the person below."

What I've learned over the years is that you are responsible for and must own the results you get. Let's put more emphasis on that.

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If you act meek and mild, that's how others will treat you. While some bosses are egomaniacal jerks, most aren't. In fact, I've known a lot of business leaders with

tremendous power who never used it to bully others. Recognize that most of the customers and bosses you'll work with are decent people; you just have to give them the opportunity to treat you as an equal. If you do, they will make a consistent effort to *listen* and talk, to solicit ideas rather than just offering them, to ask for feedback rather than just giving it.

It is true that just because you're capable of having a partner relationship doesn't mean it will automatically happen. You must first be comfortable enough in your own skin to listen, trust, and respect others. I've tried (not always successfully) to adhere to this ideal. A few years back, Tim Hoyle, one of the subcontractors of my firm Victory Consulting, was talking to me about my vision for the company, and he said, "Joe, I'm curious. You've been successful, but sometimes I think you do what you do because it's safe and secure. Are you really happy with what you're doing?"

Tim is an outstanding executive coach with great insight into human behavior. He nailed me with that question, and I suppose my first reaction was to respond defensively. I could have said something like, "Hey, you've crossed the line with that question." But I gave Tim's words serious thought, and the more I thought about them, the more I realized that I had slipped into a comfort zone. Ultimately, his willingness to ask a difficult, potentially threatening question helped me move my company in a more strategically sound and personally rewarding direction.

I had made it clear to Tim from the start of our relationship that I wanted him to speak honestly to me at all times, that the only negative consequences would be if he refused to do so and sugarcoated his comments. Earlier in my career, I'm not sure if I could have handled his honesty. Eventually, I had reached a point where I valued relating to everyone I worked with on a level playing field. Tim and I were relating as partners, not in the legal sense, but as business colleagues and human beings.

Here are the three key traits of partner relationships:

1. *Respect for differences:* Let's say your customer is an entrepreneur who never graduated from college while you're a Harvard MBA (or vice versa). You respect that your customer pulled himself up by his bootstraps, and he respects that you had the smarts to obtain an Ivy League degree. Your differences may provide creative tension but not negative conflict. You may tease each other, but there's respect behind the teasing. Plus, you've got a distinct advantage over a boss and his direct report who share similar backgrounds. You and your customer can look at problems and opportunities from two perspectives rather than one.
2. *Tolerance for faults:* Everyone has flaws and makes mistakes. In successful partnerships, you don't chastise the other person over a lack of knowledge or skill in a given area. You may not like it, but you accept it. Ideally, the person's other strengths or your strengths more than compensate for whatever he or she is lacking. Your tolerance of others also encourages even the most ambitious boss to be tolerant of your flaws. It can be disarming when you accept someone for who he or she is; in doing this, you are also giving your boss or customer a reason to accept you for who you are. More important, fostering tolerance in others also prevents you from hiding your flaws. We've all experienced or witnessed moments when you or someone you know has tried to fake it, fearing repercussions if you were to say, "I don't know." Instead of asking for help, you try to bluff your way through a task. When someone calls your bluff, you're in trouble. You come off as dishonest. In partnering relationships, tolerance makes bluffing unnecessary, and this candor builds foundational trust.

3. *Honest, diplomatic feedback:* If you've ever had a boss who reprimanded you for making a mistake, you may not believe that any boss is capable of offering kind and constructive criticism. In partnering relationships, tearing apart people isn't acceptable. You counteract that tendency by communicating honestly at all times. Forthright communication delivered with kindness and consideration yields results. How can you learn and grow unless your boss or customer is telling you the truth about your performance? How can you learn and grow if these people tell you the truth but do so with hostility and a desire to hurt? The most productive, results-producing business relationships I've ever had or have coached have involved continuous, honest, and caring dialogue. These relationships make me want to contribute my ideas, not just carry out someone else's ideas. These open exchanges are where innovation comes from. When we know that our partner is providing feedback from a perspective of genuine concern, we are able to thrive and learn.

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While these three traits are essential to a partnering ideal, I should add that it's unrealistic to expect this ideal to exist every moment in every relationship. We're all human, and even when both people in productive business relationships are attempting to respect differences, tolerate faults, and provide honest, diplomatic feedback; they sometimes slip up. Here's a nonbusiness example that illustrates this point.

My family and I recently had breakfast at a local pancake house, and when the waitress brought us our meal, the pancakes were stringy and falling apart. My wife and I were annoyed; how could they call themselves a pancake house when their signature dish was so bad? As I approached the counter to pay the bill, I fully intended to voice my complaint as I usually do—I figured they might have a new cook or there was a problem with their equipment, and they should know about it. The manager was behind the counter and, before I could say anything, he offered me a wide and genuine smile, his eyes sparkled and he said in his charming Greek accent, “My friend, how was everything for you today?”

“It . . . it was great.”

Sometimes, you need to temper your feedback. In some cases, you may not want to hurt the other person’s feelings. Other times, you may be too intimidated to say something. It happens in the best of partnerships as well as after the worst of meals. I relate this pancake story so you don’t have unrealistic expectations about what partnering involves. There are going to be times when you or your partner fails to exhibit the traits that mark a partnership. Don’t expect perfection from yourself or others. What you should expect from yourself is honesty most of the time. If you’re honest with yourself and others in most instances, you can hold your tongue under special circumstances to keep from pushing the relationship into order-taker mode.

### **STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT**

Whether you need to transition an order-taker relationship to a partnership or create an equal relationship from the start, I want to assure you of one thing: this strategy works. I’ve used this process myself, and I’ve helped my clients use it. It’s effective because it doesn’t just

change what you do in business relationships but how you think about them. As you'll discover, both your attitude and actions need to be adjusted to create partnership relationships.

Let's look at the questions you can use with a boss or customer when creating a partnering relationship:

### **Questions to Ask When Forming Partnering Relationships**

- What should I know about working with you?
- What is your leadership/working style?
- How often would you like to meet?
- How do you prefer to communicate—by e-mail, cell phone, or in the office?
- What qualities describe your ideal work partner?

Maybe you're worried that you're going to offend people by asking these questions. Maybe they even strike you as presumptuous. If so, I'm going to let you in on a little secret: Other people want to ask similar questions of you. Your boss would love to know how you communicate best. It would make her a better boss because she would know how to motivate your performance. Your customer would appreciate knowing that you believe it's important to get together in person at least once a week. He would feel a high level of service that could result in additional business.

So it's a fair exchange. Just as important, if you don't ask these questions, you're essentially saying, "I don't expect to be treated as an equal; I'm not important enough to deserve the answers." Or, you may think, "This seems risky. Why don't more people ask these questions?" Because most people don't realize that when it comes to business, they are playing *not to lose*. Life is short and that's why this book is about *playing to win*.

If you make a habit out of asking these questions, then you make a strong statement about who you are. You're telling everyone you work with, "I'm confident enough to ask questions." Don't let fear or skepticism stop you from making this effort. Once you try it, repeat it, and make it a habit, you'll get results.

The answers can also help you define your relationships. If you define the parameters of the relationship early on, you won't be blindsided by order-giver demands. When a customer responds about working style by telling you that he expects 24/7 availability, explain that you have family responsibilities, that you play tennis with your son on Saturday mornings so that's out, that you and your spouse treat yourself to a dinner out every Saturday night. When responding to a potential partner who is acting in a superior manner, it is important to maintain positive communication. Rather than be put off by their demands, suggest alternatives that work for both of you. Right from the start, make sure you both understand what is and what is not acceptable.

Asking questions and providing options shows that you want a comfortable working relationship. Asking these questions also provides a good transition for you to make statements related to each of these questions:

### **Statements to Make When Forming Partnering Relationships**

- Here's what you need to know about me . . .
- My working style is described as . . .
- I like to meet at least once every two weeks because . . .
- Let's meet in person when we have challenges—and leave the facts, figures, and dates for e-mails and phone calls.
- My ideal working partner is someone who . . .

Before asking these questions or making these statements, you need to be able to read the other person and anticipate how this process will make them feel. If you have an old-school boss, he may not like your assertiveness. But people are remarkably respectful of those who ask questions and clarify their own preferences.

Framing the questions and statements so that your intention is clear is essential to the success of this process. If you fire five questions at your new boss within seconds of being introduced to her, she may smile at you but think to herself, "This character is highly unstable." If you issue your statements like demands, a customer will soon cease to be a customer. Imagine how you would respond if someone who worked for you walked into your office and said: "Look, here are the guidelines of working with me because *I only work as a partner*. Now, take notes because I talk fast and never repeat myself. I said grab your pen!"

The key is communicating these questions and statements naturally and nicely. In other words, use *kindfidence*.

### **KINDFIDENCE**

Kindfidence is like an herbal tea; it's a gentle blend of kindness, confidence, compassion, and humility. Most people err on the side of kindness or confidence; they ask the questions in a way that comes across as overly soft (uncertain, meek) or overly hard (arrogant, presumptuous). The trick is blending the two extremes, finding a way to be assertive but also polite and respectful. If you can hit the right note, you're likely to receive a kindfident response in return.

Be consciously aware of situations where you can integrate kindfident questions and statements into conversations. It is easier to introduce them when an opportunity arises, rather than forcing a boss or customer to revisit them out of context. Sue, for instance, was a young management consultant with a well-known firm who was

assigned to work with an up-and-coming entrepreneur. A recent profile in a local publication noted this entrepreneur's propensity for calling people at all hours of the day or night. This was completely unacceptable to Sue who was a single parent to three-year-old twins. She waited until her second meeting with him—a lunch—where they went over an initial list of ideas for structuring a new venture that the entrepreneur was contemplating. He responded enthusiastically to the ideas, and so Sue brought up the article and some of the positive observations of the reporter. Then she brought up the calls and asked if was a style he employed with his professional service providers. He asked her if that was a problem, and she said it was because of her two small children. Sue offered, "But let me suggest a few alternatives that might help us deal with late night or weekend emergencies . . ." The alternatives proved acceptable. More than that, the entrepreneur received the message that Sue expected to be treated with respect and consideration and that she would treat him the same way. There was nothing wishy-washy about Sue's approach. There was also nothing resentful. She used her kindfidence to deal with a touchy situation, and she deserved the results she earned.

### **TRANSITIONING RELATIONSHIPS**

At this point, you may be thinking that there's nothing you can do to change the relationship with a stubborn command-and-control boss. Not once in five years has he ever asked your opinion about an important issue. Not once in eight years has she ever tried to adjust her style to facilitate your working relationship.

As impossible as it seems, with effort, these relationships can change. Many command-and-control bosses can be dictators on the surface, but they can be decent people underneath. It's not always easy to create an equal relationship

with that hidden, decent person, and it can take time. But trying to do so is better than doing nothing. You cannot change people, but you can influence them. Too many professionals jeopardize their professional accomplishments and personal happiness by not trying. As hockey legend Wayne Gretzky once said, “It is a scientific fact that you will miss one hundred percent of the shots you never take.”

To help you take your shots and begin to change the dynamics of these trying relationships, here’s a three-phase process called “Managing Up”:

### **Phase I—Preparation**

- *Set a time to meet.* Don’t ambush your boss or customer. If your intention to change the relationship catches her by complete surprise, she may react defensively and not really listen to what you have to say. Therefore, put it on the calendar. When she asks what the purpose of the meeting is, explain that it’s about the relationship but don’t go into detail. Find a time that’s good for both of you, where neither one of you will be distracted or rushing through the meeting to get to something else. Especially with busy executives or CEOs, getting both of you to focus on the relationship and its outcomes is pivotal.
- *Go into the meeting with a plan.* You want to tell your boss that you feel like you’re just executing his ideas rather than having any ideas of your own and that your contribution is going to be limited if that’s all you’re doing. Make sure you know what you want to say, and more important, do some scenario planning to prepare for what you might get back in return.
- *Get premeeting feedback.* Get feedback from people you trust who will be brutally honest with you about your intended approach and outcomes. Are you asking too much? Too little? Are you being belligerent? Are

you being too meek and mild? If the feedback makes sense, adjust your pitch accordingly. You'll also gain great ideas from third-party suggestions. This particular suggestion requires openness and management of your ego.

### **Phase II—Delivery**

- *Manage your emotions.* This doesn't mean ignoring your feelings or putting on an act—you want to be genuine—but if you're upset or angry, you're likely to derail the purpose of the meeting. The other person will react to how you say things rather than what you say. Keep your voice and body language calm and controlled; project confidence and certainty but not arrogance and accusation.
- *Get to the point.* State the reason for meeting kindly right up front and that you'd like to share your perspective and that you want to hear his perspective. A strong statement is attention getting and provides both of you with a clear road map to follow.
- *Be fully engaged in the exchange, not just your agenda.* Perfunctory listening is unacceptable. Think fast and hard about the points the other person is making. Are they valid? Are they based on a mistaken assumption? Do you feel one of his points is fair and another is not? Keep your mind open and your brain concentrating to answer these questions and consider the other person's reasoning.
- *Push back if necessary.* Don't accept dismissive or patronizing responses. If the other person is interrupting, ignoring, or doing anything that suggests you're not getting through, bring it to his attention respectfully and request that he really listen to what you're trying to say.

- *Review and decide on a next step.* Don't leave things hanging. Instead, summarize your exchange, clarify any misunderstandings that emerge from the summary, and agree on next steps that will help you move the relationship toward a more equal basis.

### **Phase III—Follow-Up**

- *Monitor progress.* Make sure agreed-on next steps are carried out, next meetings are attended, and new attitudes and actions characterize the relationship. If you feel the relationship is improving because of specific actions, terrific—share this information. If not, share this information too and explore why the relationship is still stuck in order-taker mode.
- *Put it in writing.* You may want a record of what has been agreed to verbally. If you think the relationship will benefit from written rules to follow and written reminders about what to do (and what not to do), then write it. Documentation helps people commit to change.

These three phases are action steps that, if applied, make the transition to a partnering relationship easier. If you've ever tried to be friends with someone with whom you had a romantic relationship, you know that relationship transitions can be tough. Also, what works with one person in a transition might not work with another. So keep the process fluid. Step number one in phase two—managing your emotions—may be the key for one relationship. In another relationship, the transition key may be diligent follow-up.

### **REALITY CHECK: IS RESISTANCE COMING FROM THE OTHER PERSON ... OR FROM YOU?**

Be prepared to encounter some resistance. Many people have difficulty *not* being in control and don't want to relinquish

even the slightest amount of power. Others don't like being challenged or have been operating within that order-taking relationship so long that they believe it truly provides the best means for getting things done.

A small percentage of these people are never going to change no matter what you do. A larger percentage will resist but may change given time and your persistence.

More important, be aware that the resistance you encounter may be generated by you! Don't automatically assume it's the other guy's fault. I have encountered this stumbling block often in my work.

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*Resistance often arises from your own insecurities and fears.*

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#### **PARTNERSHIP AXIOMS TO REMEMBER**

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- You deserve respect from everyone, regardless of status, experience, or educational background.
- The customer is *not* always right, if the customer is disrespectful, rude, or unreasonable.
- Your ideas have high value . . . but you must share them with others.

I've worked with men and women who think of and talk to themselves as if they're hesitant, risk averse, and don't value their own talents. But these same people are shocked when colleagues do not treat them as partners. Self-perception matters in any relationship, but it matters especially when you're managing up. If you go hat in hand to your boss, then he'll treat you like a beggar. Therefore, you must believe you are partnership material.

If the other person still shows resistance to this concept, there are two strategies you can use to help convince him:

1. *Bring the resistance out into the open.* Conscious awareness of resistance is a critical first step. Maybe the other person doesn't even realize she's fighting against treating you as an equal. Maybe it's a status issue—your boss believes all direct reports should be second-class citizens. Arrange a meeting and be very specific in detailing the problem and your proposed solution. Don't be long-winded or deliver a philosophical talk on the need for equality. Short and simple works best. You may find that a concise description of the problem and a smart, proposed solution can melt resistance. But remember, less is more.
2. *Write it down.* Busy people sometimes have good intentions but bad execution. They may agree with the points you raised in your partnership conversation, but then some crisis arises and those points aren't acted on. If you want accountability, a written document helps. Plus, when it's in writing, you can submit it, edit it, and obtain approval. A written statement also gives you leverage. I've seen conversations get derailed because of the first thing out of someone's mouth. You open badly, your boss gets stuck on the first point, and you can never move the conversation forward. When you've got your argument down in writing, it is much less likely to happen.

### **REWARDS OUTWEIGH THE RISKS**

Don't wait for the right time. Don't get bogged down in what-ifs. The sooner you express your interest in being treated like a partner, the sooner it will happen. Ask yourself

how many more weeks or days you can stand being given routine chores rather than challenging assignments. Think about how your career will remain dead in the water unless you're offered the chance to show what you can do.

If you're unhappy being an order taker, you've probably told everyone you know about this unhappiness except the one person you should be telling: your boss. I conduct a coaching seminar for middle and senior managers that covers a specific module on managing up and viewing yourself as a partner. Many participants have remarked that they have a disconnect with their bosses and aren't honest with them about their motivations, concerns, or dislikes. As a result, one of the assignments I give them is to level with their bosses about what they believe is wrong in the relationship. When I assign this task to people, they all admit that they've told spouses, friends, and others what they really want to tell their bosses. So they've rehearsed what they need to say, they just haven't said it to the right person. Once they do finally say it, they find that the relationship improves exponentially. There has been a staggeringly high return of positive transitions simply by taking these steps. But preparation and action are what elicit the highest results.

### **Benefits of Achieving Partnership Status**

- *Promotions, raises, and job offers:* People engaged in partnering relationships tend to receive more recognition and promotions. These rewards flow from the partnership dynamic, where partners feel compelled to make information, ideas, other people, and opportunities available to you.
- *An expanded network of successful business people:* In unequal relationships, bosses and clients have little incentive to introduce you to people who can help your career within the organization or outside

of it. They fear that if they do so, you'll take another job, and they'll lose your services. In a partnership, people trust each other not to use referrals to job-hop (unless there is an open discussion beforehand about this subject). People who partner in work situations recognize that they can draw on an expanded network to get work done more efficiently and effectively. As a result, they share mutual resources without hesitation.

- *A great breadth and depth of business knowledge:* Knowledge is power in today's workplace. Knowledge management programs exist because companies value information and ideas. Order-taker relationships are characterized by one-sided data dumping. Facts and figures may move back and forth, but the relationship stays safe and does not improve for you or your company. No one challenges the conventional wisdom or offers provocative ideas. On the other hand, partners don't constantly censor their exchanges. If you were to eavesdrop on a dialogue between two equals, you would overhear a rich back-and-forth flow of theories, what-if scenarios, cutting-edge news, and so on.
- *More opportunities for advancement and profit:* Your boss knows that there's going to be an opening in another department within the month. Your customer is aware that a company with whom he does business is looking for a new supplier. In order-taker relationships, these opportunities are hoarded. They are only parceled out on rare occasions and only as part of a deal—"I'll tell you about opportunity x, if you'll do y for me." It's not just job openings and business prospects that are shared in these relationships. Your boss may tell you about a great executive education program that a local university is offering and suggest that it could help you fill

out your resume and make you a more attractive job candidate internally. Your customer may let you know about an upcoming trade conference and recommend a conference seminar that he feels will open your eyes to emerging trends in your industry. Give yourself access to these opportunities. Make others will feel sufficiently comfortable in the relationship that they will want to tell you about them.

- *A highly effective, two-person team:* Order-taker relationships can get things done. Partner relationships can get things done well. Think about how difficult it is for you and your boss to execute a plan or how it seems to take forever before you and your client can agree on a new program or project. Because of suspicion, laziness, or the lack of vested interest, order-taking teams proceed without much energy or creativity. In contrast, partners are much more focused and committed to achieving their goals.
- *Courage:* People who are uncertain and fearful do not maximize their potential and sadly limit their achievements. This not only has an impact on professional accomplishments but on personal fulfillment as well. When you manage up, you draw strength from the relationship. When someone in a position of power treats you as an equal, then you act like an equal. You make more assertive, confident, and accurate decisions. When your boss or customer becomes your ally, you're going to feel more powerful and in control. Someone has your back, so you can take chances you might never have taken before.

Courage means you speak out when you feel someone is making a major blunder. It also means you are eager to offer fresh thinking even though you're aware that such thinking may offend traditionalists in the organization. And it means you're seen as someone who has the courage

of his or her convictions. You are viewed as a leader, not a follower.

Pursue partnerships with people of influence, whether they're in your company or outside of it. Remember that this first step in the relationships-for-results process is ongoing. It is the first step, but it is also the goal. All the other steps we're going to discuss will facilitate forming and maintaining partnerships, including making yourself vulnerable, the subject of the next chapter.

### **IMPACT: WHAT PARTNERSHIP MEANS TO YOU**

The question everyone asks me after a presentation is, "Joe, what you said sounds great, but what does all this mean for my job and my career?" It's a good question. Who doesn't want bottom-line results? I hope I've communicated the job and career benefits of partnering throughout the chapter, but I've distilled the impact to its essence, as follows:

- *Trust:* Working within an open and honest relationship, you'll feel free to express your ideas and take on new challenges. It's energizing to work in a setting where hidden agendas are absent and you can be genuine.
- *Performance:* You're empowered to work with greater creativity, freedom from fear (of making mistakes), and the ability to pursue opportunities. As a partner, you take pride of ownership in the work you do and have a vested interest in achieving objectives.
- *Profit:* Your dynamic exchange of knowledge, skills, and feedback turns you into a results-producing machine. You now possess the resources necessary to make more money for yourself and your company.