Thinking Critically about Alliances:
Important Questions for Alliance Partners to Ask

ANTICIPATING

• How will we draw in and motivate people who are critical to the alliance's success?
• How can the strategic sponsors of the alliance demonstrate their enthusiasm for (and commitment to) the alliance?
• Are we doing the alliance for sound business reasons, for emotional reasons, or for other reasons?
• Do we start small and build up, or do we go for the whole thing at once?
• What rumors are making the rounds, and how do we manage them?
• Is our rationale commonly understood and shared?

ENGAGING

• Will there be external lawyers, consultants, or others involved in the alliance? What will their role be? Who are they working for?
• Can we find early wins to build momentum?
• What kind of training will people need?
• What are the key roles that we will need people to play? Who will fill those roles?

VALUING

• How can we create face to face time for key individuals from all partner companies?
• How can we create cross-functional participation?
• Do we really trust our partner's expertise enough to let them control some things?
• How can we keep the people "in the trenches" involved?
• If it takes longer than we expect, are we willing to wait for this to come together?
• How can we ensure that critical issues don't get hidden or ignored?
COORDINATING

• Have we created strong interface points? Are we communicating regularly?
• Are people spending face to face time together?
• Are people from many different functions involved?
• What are we doing to rally the people "in the trenches?"
• Do we have enough energy to face difficult times?
• Does the company "buy in" to this alliance?
• Are we giving relationships enough time to develop?
• Do we have the trust of our partner?
• Are we regularly reviewing our progress?

INVESTING

• Are we willing to make hard choices? Are communicating those choices to our partners? Do we know the choices they are facing?
• Can we live with the choices we must make? Can our partners?
• Assuming some will win and some will lose with these choices, have we planned how to manage their reactions?
• Are we willing to compromise for the sake of this alliance?
• Are we contributing as much as we are getting back?
• How fast will we expand? Are we poised to build on the alliance capabilities?
• How do investments in this alliance affect other alliances in our portfolio?

STABILIZING

• How does this alliance fit in with our company's business? Are we maintaining it for cash? For technology? For market access?
• Are making the most of the trust and interdependence we have built with our partners?
• Are we addressing issues as they arise?
• Should this alliance be a stand alone business?
• Are we letting our alliance managers run the business?