ALLIANCE MANAGER COMPETENCIES:  
A TOOL FOR SELECTION CONVERSATIONS

Our research has demonstrated that there are a set of four broad, overarching characteristics that alliance managers should have. These are:

- Functional Competencies
- Earned Competencies
- Interpersonal Competencies
- Alliance Mindset

The following tool provides a set of questions that address each of the four competency areas. We suggest using this tool as a guide for executives to think about individuals who are being considered for alliance management positions. Think about the degree to which those individuals exhibit these competencies, as well as their ability to develop them.

I. Functional Competencies

These are competencies that relate directly to the business issues the alliance will face. They are typically gained through experience and formal training as a manager progresses in his or her career.

- Does this person have appropriate line management skills?
- Does this person thoroughly understand staff functions (e.g., finance, HR)?
- Is this person's educational background suitable for the position?
- Does this person have a strong understanding of our business and of the alliance’s business?

II. Earned Competencies

These are competencies that are developed over time as a manager learns how to use the "informal" channels that exist inside and outside the company, the industry, and the profession.

- Has this person developed an extensive network within our company?
- Does this person have an extensive business network in the industry of the alliance?
- Can this person develop solid relationships within the partner company?
- Does this individual have credibility in our company?
- Does this individual have credibility and respect outside our company, especially with our partners and in the alliance?
III. Interpersonal Competencies

These competencies relate directly to the relationship issues that the alliance will face. They form the set of skills and abilities that allow a manager to create, cultivate and maintain critical relationships for the alliance.

- Is this person comfortable in social business situations?
- Does this person demonstrate sensitivity to differences between cultures?
- Is this person considered an effective communicator?
- Does this person easily alter his or her behavior to fit with a new environment or setting?
- Is the person attuned to non-verbal communication?
- Can this person easily sense the mood of a group or individual?

IV. Alliance Mindset

While harder to recognize, alliance mindsets, have been identified as critical to alliance success. They are more difficult to find and measure, yet they are consistently cited as markers that distinguished truly excellent alliance managers.

- Does this person have an affinity for complexity?
- Can this person think in terms of patterns, connections and relationships?
- Does this person thrive on challenges?
- Does this person never stop learning from their experiences?
- Is this person viewed by others as "thinking about and seeing the world differently?"
- Can this person simultaneously consider multiple points of view?