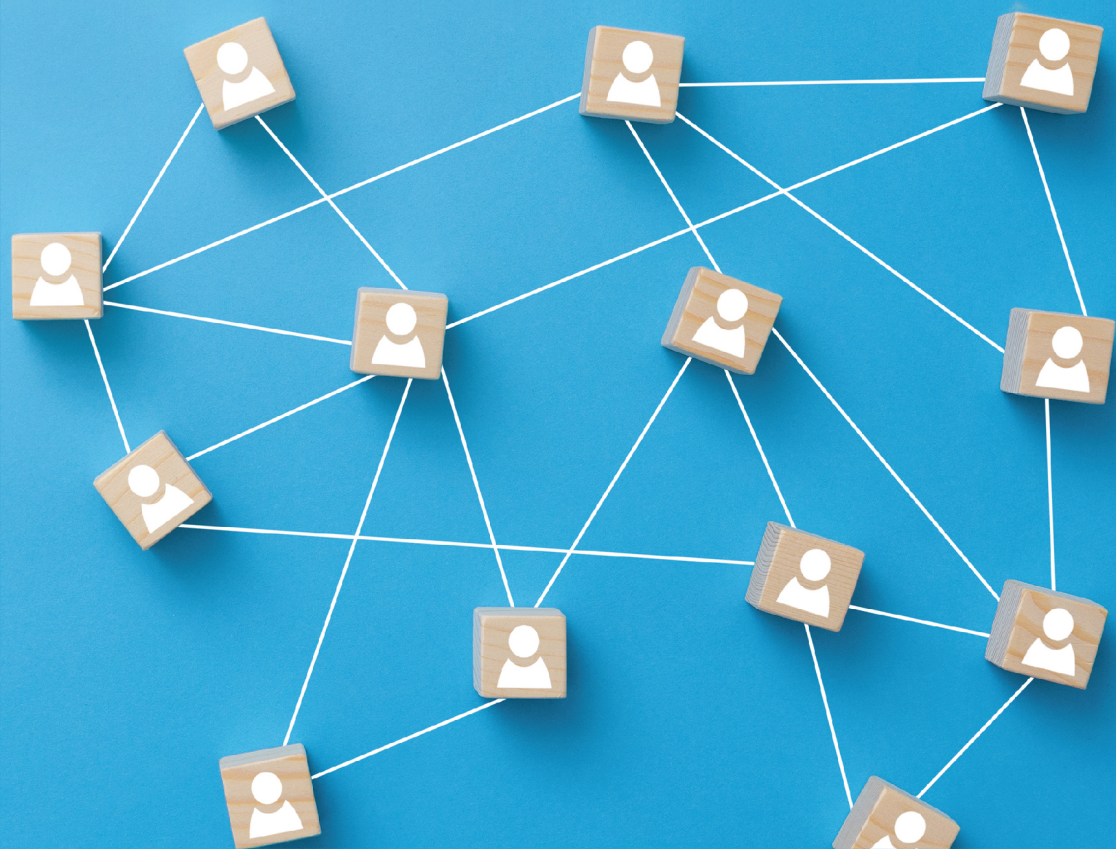


EFFECTIVE PARTNER RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS



MARC ROSENBERG, CPA

EFFECTIVE PARTNER RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

Marc Rosenberg, CPA

Ellen Rosenberg, PhD

All rights reserved. These materials may not be reproduced or distributed to any other person without written permission from *The Rosenberg Associates LTD*. This publication is intended to provide general information in regard to the subject matter covered. Although prepared by a professional, this publication should not be used as a substitute for professional services in specific situations. If expert assistance is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

Copyright © 2014
The Rosenberg Associates Ltd.
1000 Skokie Boulevard, Suite 555
Wilmette, IL 60091

MONOGRAPHS BY MARC ROSENBERG

- CPA Firm Partner Retirement / Buyout Plans
- CPA Firm Mergers: Your Complete Guide
- How CPA Firms Work: The Business of Public Accounting
- CPA Firm Management & Governance
- CPA Firm Succession Planning: A Perfect Storm
- Strategic Planning and Goal Setting For Results
- How to Bring In New Partners
- How to Operate a Compensation Committee
- What Really Makes CPA Firms Profitable?
- Guide to Planning the Firm Retreat
- Effective Partner Relations and Communications

For more information and to purchase additional titles visit:
www.rosenbergassoc.com + click on
“Monographs by Marc Rosenberg”

Connect with Marc:
marc@rosenbergassoc.com
847.251.7100

Ellen Rosenberg, Ph.D is a clinical psychologist and certified psychoanalyst in private practice in the Chicago area. Her clients include professionals and business executives in individual and couples' therapy. She is a Clinical Associate on the faculty of Northwestern University Medical School in the Division of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. She has consulted with Marc on partner and staff issues for many years.

EFFECTIVE PARTNER RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

Marc Rosenberg, CPA

Ellen Rosenberg, Ph.D

All rights reserved. These materials may not be reproduced or distributed to any other person without written permission from *The Rosenberg Associates LTD*. This publication is intended to provide general information in regard to the subject matter covered. Although prepared by a professional, this publication should not be used as a substitute for professional services in specific situations. If expert assistance is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

Copyright © 2014
The Rosenberg Associates Ltd.
1000 Skokie Boulevard, Suite 555
Wilmette, IL 60091

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: PARTNER RELATIONSHIP GROUND RULES	3
Call Me Now or Call Me Later	3
Basic Ground Rules to Establish Upfront.....	3
Partner Collegiality vs. Accountability: Can We Have Both?.....	3
Choose the Right Partner from the Outset	7
Bringing in New Partners: Thresholds & Core Competencies.....	9
Firms Should Not Allow Transgressions.....	11
CHAPTER 3: COMMUNICATION	13
Poor Communication: We Know it When We See It	13
How Do We Define Good Partner Communication?	14
Forums for Partner Communication	15
Partner Meetings	16
Partner Retreats	18
Exercise for a Partner Retreat	20
Informal Forums for Partner Communication	21
CHAPTER 4: WHAT BEING A GOOD PARTNER IS ALL ABOUT	23
How to Be a Good Partner to Your Partners	24
What Do Partners Owe Their Firm?	25
Partner Teamwork	26
Partner Performance Feedback	27
Partner Performance Self-Evaluation Form	28
Managing Under-Performing Partners	32

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5: WHY PARTNERS SHOULD STAY TOGETHER	35
Staying Together vs Parting Company:	35
Why Should Partners Stay Together?	36
CHAPTER 6: RESOLVING PARTNER CONFLICT.....	43
Healthy Disagreements: Why Conflict is Good	43
Examples of Partner Conflict	43
Summary: Step - By - Step Process to Resolving Conflict.....	50
CHAPTER 7: HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES	51
Important Personal Health Issues	51
A Few Words About Men	53
A Few Words About Women	54
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	57

1

Introduction

“Isn’t it a shame that we have to pay a consultant to travel half-way across the country to get us to convene a formal meeting with each other, something so simple, yet something we have been unable to do ourselves.”

The managing partner of a firm spoke these words on the morning of an all day retreat that I facilitated for his firm. It was the first time the strife-torn partners of this firm had convened a formal meeting with each other – of any kind – in years.

Throughout my consulting career, roughly 60% of the firms I have consulted with either had either major partner conflicts or a pronounced lack of effective partner communication.

One of the most difficult issues for CPA firm partners is the relationships and communication between partners and the resulting, inevitable conflicts. The 60% statistic above is clear evidence of this.

Unless the partners of a firm work reasonably well together, it is almost impossible for them to achieve results that are any different than a union of solos would accomplish practicing under one roof while sharing staff and overhead. When partners don’t work well together, the success of their firm is threatened:

- Management is weak because the partners don’t trust each other.
- Partners point fingers when important duties go unattended.
- Accountability is non-existent.

- The staff are demoralized by the mixed messages they get from partners who are not on the same page.
- Staff don't stay around long because of the obvious signs of partner strife. They certainly would never want to be partners with this group of disgruntled people.
- Clients are under-served because firm partners' expertise isn't shared.
- Prospects are lost when partners refuse to team sell.
- Innovation and visioning stop because partners are focused on work in the "here and now" and don't spend time innovating and developing a vision for their firm.

Until the partners of a firm learn how to get along and work well together, problems such as those listed above remain unresolved and can paralyze the organization. Indeed, there have been several occasions throughout my career in which I declined to work with a firm (on a project such as strategic planning) because I saw right away that the firm and its partner relations were so dysfunctional. I knew that my work and the fees they would pay me would be a waste of time and money.

Many of you are certainly familiar with Jim Collins' legendary book, *Good To Great*. It has always seemed to me that Collins had CPA firms at least partially in mind when he wrote the book. The following passage from this book reinforces the importance of partner relations and communications:

"Great firms don't first figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. Instead, they first get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figure out where to drive it. People either stay on the bus for a long time or they get off in a hurry."

The sentiment here is that when a CPA firm has key people who are negative, argumentative, naysayers, pessimistic and refuse to compromise or be accountable, the organization can never move forward. The cancer needs to be removed before it spreads throughout the firm. Then, and only then, can you work together and move forward.

What causes these problems? Why can't partners get along? How can partners work well together? What do they need to do? What does it mean to be a "good" partner? When inevitable conflicts arise (even healthy firms have conflicts), how can they be resolved?

The remainder of this monograph answers these questions.

**Practical, easy-to-read, actionable solutions to launch your firm
into the next level of success.**

**Generous bulk discounts available.
Contact us with any questions at service@rosenbergassoc.com.**

[CLICK HERE TO ORDER NOW](#)