Corporate
Report

PORTALS

Perspectives on Partnership

Partnership is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a relationship in which two or more people, organisations, or countries work together as partners'.

Partnership Assistance, association, agreement, alliance, combination, teamwork, cooperation, collaboration, coordination, coopetition, shared interest, joint-effort, joint ownership, joint venture, teaming agreement, tie-ups, union, affiliation, ecosystem, interconnected, Interaction, Integration, licencing, liaison, synergy, coaction, unity.*

We all know what a partnership is - an arrangement between two or more parties in pursuit of a shared goal or activity to share its collective gains and losses and / or mutual benefits.

But do we really appreciate the many forms of partnership and ways of effective working there are? A few are outlined below.

- **Collaboration** (The action of working with someone to produce something)
- **Cooperation** (The action or process of working together to the same end, especially by complying, helping, supporting and contributing readily to the cause)
- **Coordination** (The cooperative effort of different parts working efficiently together resulting in an effective and mutual relationship)
- **Coopetition** (The collaboration between business competitors, in the hope of mutually beneficial results)
- **Integration** (The action of successfully joining, combining, unifying or consolidating two or more different elements or processes together)

Successful partnerships

The benefits of working in any one of these ways can be many and varied, and can also be realised by all parties to lesser or greater extents.

Problem solving, creativity and innovation can all be enhanced by putting the right teams together. Skill gaps filled and technical issues resolved, time scale improvements, resource availability and performance efficiencies can also be achieved. Shared learnings, networking, coaching, upskilling and technology transfers are all potential gains.

But in order to achieve any of this, the ground rules must be clearly defined and established up front.

Number one is an agreement by all parties on the shared goal, outcome and target. All members must be heading in the same direction for any partnership or association to work.

Time frames, scope, deliverables, budgets also all have to be broken down and clarified.

Boundaries need to be clearly stated, along with the accountabilities, responsibilities and ownership. This includes the fundamentals of who does what, who leads or primes, who contributes, who influences and who ultimately signs off.

Regular clear communications and project transparency is absolutely key, with an agreed use of terminology and approach, common platforms, aligned processes and key milestones all jointly committed to.

Much of this approach falls under the basic disciplines of project management – but getting all of this right is a skill – projects and partnerships don't go wrong, they start wrong. And when you add in to the mix that partnerships often involve different departments, organisations, cultures or organisations, all with conflicting priorities and often increased pressures, it is critical that these up-front principles are set out and agreed at the very start.

Security printing sector

Partnership in its many forms often works best when it sits within specialist, niche or highly technical industries and environments.

The currency and identity sectors – made up of specialist substrate and component suppliers, security printing companies, government authorities, central banks, border control and law enforcement agencies – therefore, makes for the ideal partnership scenario.

With a combination of suppliers, integrators, customers, end users, stakeholder and influencers all involved in the process of banknotes and passports all within a relatively compact space, it means any approach to partnering must be creative, robust and secure.

Facilitating such collaborations are the industry associations and alliances – including Intergraf, Banknotes Ethics Initiative (BnEI), ISO, ICAO, The Secure Identity Alliance (SIA), Document Security Alliance (DSA) – helping to bring us all closer together.

At the core of all these relationships though, must sit the end customer. The Central Bank or Issuing Authority and the Border Agencies and Passport Control. Ultimately, it is the solving of their challenges and meeting of their goals that drives all the players in their respective ecosystems to achieve these aims.

Portals' partnerships

For specialist security paper makers Portals, the spirit of cooperation is nothing new. In fact, it is very much the Portal's way of life. Portals consistently uses the many different guises and methods of partnership to ensure their value and contribution to the industry.

In addition to always delivering against the Portals promise, we ensure that the way in which we work, every partnership and every interaction clearly demonstrates that at Portals, we are big enough to trust, and also small enough to care. An ethos we feel sits at the very heart of our approach to partnership and collaboration.

End customers

At Portals, we are wholly committed to our end customers – the governments, banks and authorities - and the strong partnerships we are priviledged to nurture with them. We pride ourselves on this focus; listening to their needs, understanding their challenges, responding to their requirements and providing solutions to their problems.

As a result of this, we know that there is never a "one-size-fits-all" or an "off-the-shelf" solution that we can offer to customers. Every product we produce is bespoke. The breadth of our experience and technical capabilities mean our customers have the flexibility to choose a paper solution that specifically complements their overall security strategy and requirements – be that in banknotes, passports or other high security documents.

Portals has a long history of strong collaboration with their customer partners. There are many examples, but one of the most influential that demonstrates this is the strong relationship between Portals and Bank of England during the Second World War when the UK economy was forced to defend itself against a flood of counterfeit notes coming into circulation. Portals and the Bank of England jointly developed the first ever use of security threads in banknotes, and the Bank also temporarily moved its printing operation to an underground vault at Overton Mill during this time.

Another more recent innovation example of our partnerships with customers is the development of banded fibres and the complex watermarking technique, Skylight™ , specifically to counter the threat of passport book dismantling and reassembly with Her Majesty's Passport Office in the UK.

Security printers

The majority of Portals' direct customers are either commercial security printers or state print works and manufacturing facilities.

We work hand in glove with our printer partners to ensure that our papers are produced and delivered to meet their every exacting needs. Such considerations as ream shape, printability and performance, drying times, processability and yield will all be agreed for each and every project, consignment and delivery.

In order to achieve a finished banknote or security document that is both aesthetically pleasing and secure, our highly skilled watermark and thread design team work closely with the document manufacturer's design team to ensure the watermark and/or thread designs complement and enhance each other.

And when it comes to customers who, for example, wish to buy all their passport components from a single source, Portals has developed relationships with suppliers of sewing threads, coated visa labels and passport cover materials, to name but a few.

Material suppliers

Portals invests heavily in the relationships with our strategic and specialist suppliers to develop mutually beneficial and lasting partnerships. We are constantly engaging with our suppliers on innovation, product development, health and safety and also matters of sustainability.

One of the main raw materials used in the production of high security paper – alongside water and energy – is cotton and / or wood pulp. We work with a small number of long-term strategic suppliers so that we can ensure that we source the best raw materials for our specialist processes.

We use the best cotton combers and linters in our banknote papers. The relationships we have with our partners has a strong focus on the quality of the cotton, but we also prioritise Health and Safety requirements, as well as reinforcing our stance on ensuring there is no slavery or child labour used.

Our wood pulps are sourced globally and all come from sustainable sources, backed by The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Portals has been granted Chain of Custody certification by the PEFC and this partnership facilitates our support of their efforts in promoting world-wide sustainable forest management.

Portals is a complete solutions integrator in providing and meeting your specific security paper needs. A skilled integrator of fibres, planchettes, silks and security threads, we do not restrict any of our manufacture to in-house only features.

Being an independent paper manufacturer, we are free to source paper inclusions from different suppliers. We are able to use and incorporate any additional integrated or applied security features available on the market into our papers. We have implemented solutions that incorporate security components from most manufacturers, working closely with them to assure a successful integration that creates no manufacturing issues for subsequent members of the supply chain and the end customers.

We work and collaborate continuously with industry-wide players including design companies, printing machine manufacturers, thread and OVD suppliers, suppliers of cash processing equipment, inspection systems and automated teller machines on both a project basis for specific customer contracts but also in long-term on-going partnerships to ensure the best continued alignment and integration of all our products.

Core to our innovation approach as a whole, is the role of partners – whether that is with established players within the industry or with organisations that have a brilliant idea or product but need support in adapting it to fit within the high security markets. As already outlined above, some of this innovation will also be developed with and be obvious to our end customers as it is visible in the products we sell. However, other partner innovations will be hidden behind the scene, sensitive, covert or simply process and production related.

Fellow security paper makers

Being the leading supplier of passport papers and the second largest commercial supplier of banknote paper globally, we play a key role in ensuring that the supply of security papers into these markets is consistent and maintained. With only a few specialist players in this area, Portals takes a positive approach to coopetition, and willingly collaborates with other paper makers as opportunity arises.

Portals has a number of established licensing agreements in place with the leading players within the industry. This includes both licensing in and licensing out patents. The most popular feature we license out is our Cornerstone® technology, a specialist cylinder mould watermarking technique that reinforces the corners of a banknote note or passport bio-data page.

Everything we operate under licence agreement is managed and controlled to the highest levels of quality and performance. We are open to new licensors but our focus is always to ensure that the quality of the final product is up to the standard that customers would expect as if they had bought directly from Portals.

There are occasions when our competitors find due to the simple complexity of security paper products, that the capacity or capability may not be available at a given time on a given machine or a given manufacturing facility. At such times, Portals has readily assisted with the provision of tools, provided technical support, supplied equipment, manufactured cylinder moulds and / or performed certain processes such as specialist coating or applied foils and features, on another paper makers behalf.

Portals is in the unique position that it runs two separate paper mills with four operational paper machines at its disposal. The majority of all other security paper suppliers only operate on single sites and many with only single machine set ups. This special in-house collaboration allows Portals further flexibility in terms of its own planning schedules or capacity and operational support (such as cutting when one factory is especially busy, the other can step in) and also to benefit from enhanced capability possibilities (for example, applying embossed foils to a wood pulp base substrate).

As a result, Portals is perfectly placed as the ideal partner for Business Continuity Planning (BCP). A massive benefit to both the customer as well as other paper makers in terms of a maintained and guaranteed supply. BCP or robust disaster recovery plans are increasingly being seen as a critical component of final contract award. A break in the supply of either banknotes or passports would obviously be of great concern to the authorities and one the biggest risk factors they will seek to mitigate.

Conclusion

With so many forms of partnership and ways of working together, it is no wonder our specialist industry sector relies so heavily on them to function effectively.

At Portals, we pride ourselves on the number, longevity and success of our many and varied partnerships. Whatever you need, by working in collaboration and close cooperation with us, we can ensure all your security paper needs will be met.

About Portals

We have been keeping the same promise to the world for more than 300 years. A promise to help keep a country's economy secure and a person's identity safe.

A market leader in security features, our three specialist sites across Europe have the capacity to produce more than 16,000 tonnes of high security papers and over 3 million km of security threads and foils.

We enable the production of more than 25 billion banknotes, 70 million passports, 60 million certificates, and 200 million brand labels each year, for use in more than 100 countries around the world.

Trusted by our clients to make inspiring, beautifully designed and secure products that last – delighting our customers with our technical knowhow and specialist expertise.

Our reports

This report was produced as an overview piece for Intergraf Currency + Identity Online 2021 and is part of Portals' dedication to supporting our partners and driving industry innovation. Our series of reports share best practice from within the industry and offer the latest advice and insight to help you select and adopt secure papers to meet your requirements.

Contact us

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this report further please contact us at **info@portalsinternational.com**

Alternatively, if you'd like to find out more about Portals, please visit us at: **portalsinternational.com**

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