**The Collaboration Continuum**

**The Collaboration Continuum** is a framework for thinking strategically about relationships between nonprofit organizations and businesses. Developed by James Austin and adapted here from his book *The Collaboration Challenge,* it consists of three stages:

**Philanthropic🡨🡪----Transactional🡨🡪----Integrative**

**Philanthropic** relationships exists between nonprofit organizations and their donors, who provide tangible resources (such as money or goods) in exchange for intangible benefits from the nonprofit (such as enhanced reputation or fulfillment of the desire to help others). Generally, these interactions and activities are handled by the nonprofit’s development volunteers and staff and the business’s corporate contributions staff. Strategic value is usually determined by considering the resources nonprofits gain that they can use to achieve desired results and the opportunities businesses gain to support their communities and meet their philanthropic objectives.

**Transactional** relationships consist of exchanges of resources through specific activities, such as event sponsorship, licensing, service contracts, volunteer programs, and cause-related marketing. In comparison with the philanthropic stage, the level of interaction usually intensifies, relationship management becomes more complex, and a broader sense of partnership may develop. This stage tends to involve the business’ operating staff and more nonprofit staff from a range of areas. These relationships are usually perceived by both the business and nonprofit partners as having greater strategic value than philanthropic relationships.

**Interactive** relationships are characterized by joint activities or ventures that are perceived as having major strategic value by both the business and the nonprofit organization. These partnerships usually reflect strong understanding of each other’s values, engage top leadership and numerous staff, and involve exploration and creating of new and expanded benefits for both partners. In this stage, formal processes and procedures are developed to handle complex management requirements, and each partner’s values and practices are often affected by the others.

Movement along the Collaboration Continuum generally results from deliberate decisions by the nonprofit organization and the business to modify the scope of their relationships. Some relationships begin at the transactional or integrative stages, and many are hybrids that include philanthropic components along with other projects.

Most nonprofits are strengthened by having a diversified resource base, including a variety of relationships with businesses. Your organization can benefit by assessing current relationships with businesses and planning whether and how to move them on the Collaboration Continuum.

**MOVING ALONG THE CONTINUUM**

Fill in the name of a current alliance partner, and mark an “X” where you currently find your relationship with that business/orgn along the Collaboration Continuum, why and what’s next for the alliance.

Business/Orgn.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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*Meeting the Collaboration Challenge* Workbook*: Developing Strategic Alliances between Nonprofit Organizations and Businesses*,

Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, 2002