

Dance Lessons: Six Steps to Great Partnerships in Business and Life

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All but the most starry-eyed among us would agree that forming a great partnership, whether in life or in business, requires dedication and hard work. According to Bell and Shea, this process is all too often left to chance (particularly in the world of business).

As the title proclaims, this book offers a six-step plan, using dance as a metaphor, for analyzing a potential relationship and building it into a “great partnership.” The book does not address the legal aspects of forming a business partnership, with the exception of a half-page of legal definitions. Rather, it deals solely with the interpersonal aspects of forming business relationships. Several lessons make up each step. The dance metaphor is used throughout, including the steps “Focusing,” “Auditioning” and “Rehearsing,” and the lessons “The Conditions of Conditioning,” “Blocking Out Your Performance Together” and “Coping with Pain When You Trip Up.”

The authors’ main focus is on the advance work: no artistic collaboration is successful without hours of preparation and practice and no truly successful business partnership will be either. Exercises and examples are provided throughout to help identify potential partners, clarify the strengths and weaknesses of each partner and avoid the pitfalls inherent to any relationship. Quotes from business leaders provide insight into partnership successes and failures.

Whether you will achieve partnership greatness by following these six steps probably rests with you. If the collaboration of Rogers and Astaire is your idea of the perfect partnership, this book is definitely for you. If, on the other hand, the dance metaphor reminds you only of your two left feet, you may need to look elsewhere for guidance.

VICKI GERVICKAS (January / February 1999)

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