COLLABORATION, NETWORKS, AND PARTNERSHIP IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

An annotated bibliography of recommended articles, books, sites, and videos

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INTRODUCTION

Collaboration has a strong biblical basis, but collaboration is also an intensely practical topic and not just a matter for theological discussion. For that reason, most of the resources recommended here emphasize the "hands-on" or "how-to" aspects of what it takes to form a viable, healthy, and effective collaborative initiative for ministry and mission.

This bibliography, in line with common usage, uses the term network or networks to refer to a wide range of initiatives from alliances and coalitions to networks and partnerships.

Disclaimer: While we believe that this list of recommended network resources offer significant contributions to the field of network development, we do not necessarily endorse all approaches, models, or points that are discussed in these resources.

BOOKS

1. Foundational, must-read books


The three books in this group by Addicott, Butler, and Rickett are some of the most practical resources currently available that focus on the topic of partnership in Christian mission.

Butler's book, Well Connected, is the most recently published of the three and is the most comprehensive in content. The late Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, now Frontier Ventures, referred to Well Connected as "the quintessential partnership handbook." But has nearly 30 years of international partnership development work through InterDev and visionSynergy. In this book, he writes for an audience of reflective practitioners who want to understand the "why" of partnership development as well as the "how" of partnering well. The first part of the book develops
the theological aspects of partnership while the remainder of the book provides a clearly defined process for partnership development and a detailed description of the key factors for success. Drawing from significant personal experience, Butler includes dozens of real-world illustrations and abbreviated case studies throughout the book.

Addicott's book, *Body Matters*, provides a very readable introduction to partnering in Christian mission. Addicott and Butler were colleagues at InterDev, so both books present essentially the same process for partnership development - more condensed in Addicott's book and more expanded in Butler's book. In addition to the core process of partnership development, Addicott provides more in-depth discussion on the topics of cross-cultural differences and conflict management within inter-organizational partnerships. The book centers on the theme of relational health in the context of missional partnerships and makes the clear point that partnership is not just about the "mechanics" of working together; it is fundamentally about trust.

Rickett's book, *Making Your Partnership Work*, is the earliest and most condensed of the three in this group. Rickett's book is organized around the three "imperatives of partnership:" vision, relationships, and results. Rickett writes in the introduction:

"To have productive partnerships, we must have vision, relationship, and results. No one of these can be ignored. Reduce a partnership to vision only, and it becomes no more than good intentions. Reduce it to relationship, and it becomes a fellowship without a purpose. Reduce it to results, and it loses its capacity to remain faithful. Vision, relationships, and results depend on one another for wholeness. They are interwoven in partnership and in ministry at its best" (p.23).

Rickett's book includes a number of useful resources and checklists to help readers evaluate the potential fit between partners, develop a common understanding, and evaluate the partnership itself.

2. Cross-cultural dimensions of working in partnerships

The nine books in this group by Barnes, Birmingham & Todd, Cuerva, Lederleiter, Mischke, Rickett, Shreve, Shubert, and Toyama-Szeto and Adeleye address key issues in cross-cultural networks such as equality, dependency, accountability, power and more. The topics and issues discussed in these books are relevant to the current global mission context as the center of gravity continues to shift from established Western mission outreaches to Majority World ministries.

Mischke’s workbook and Rickett’s brief guide help readers understand some of the essential components of healthy cross-cultural networks. Birmingham and Todd provide an edited collection of topics more specifically focused in the area of relief and development work. Lederleiter's book directly addresses the highly charged issue of money and partnering. Shreve’s book sets a “partnership theology” where mission operates under extreme conditions. Barnes’, Cuevas’, Schubert’s, and Toyama-Szeto and Adeleye’s books provide an invaluable Majority World perspective on cross-cultural Christian collaboration.

3. Church/community collaborations

4. Church / agency partnerships


Peter Greer and Chris Horst make a strong biblical and organizational case for the value of Great Commission collaboration and generosity. Liew’s book explores the nature of Church and Mission Agencies relationships. As the editor, his book contains articles written from both perspectives. This book proposes moving from transactional relationships to a relationship-focused partnering practice that opens the door to collaboration and engagement.
5. Books from the earlier days of the modern "network movement"


The 1980s and 1990s saw a growing interest in partnering for world evangelization. At least a hundred multilateral and international networks and partnerships were launched with emphasis on specific language groups, people groups, cities, regions, or countries.

From the early days of the modern network movement, the three books in this group by Bush & Lutz, Kraakevik & Welliver, and Taylor provide a broad introduction to the field of collaboration in Christian mission. The books cover a wide variety of topics and include a number of case-study models of networks from around the world.

**ARTICLES**

- Wan, Enoch, and Kevin Penman. “*The Why, How, and Who of Partnership in Christian*
The articles in this group by Oxbrow, Wan, and Penman are three of the numerous articles drawing on the wisdom of the last 20 plus years of collaborative practice in Christian mission. These articles are notable for their comprehensive perspective as they reflect on the recent history of collaboration in mission and review some of the foundational literature on mission networks (including a number of the resources in this recommended list).

Aghamkar’s article provides a unique and respected South Asian perspective on the biblical and theological basis for partnership. The April 2017 issue of Mission Frontiers looks back on 30 years of missions and what has emerged from this global movement. It also looks at how networks are reshaping the future of missions.

**DEVOTIONAL**


This unique devotional guide was developed by leaders from the Philippine Children's Ministry Network as a fundraiser in partnership with VIVA. Each reflection draws on scripture to highlight different aspects of network leadership.

**VIDEOS**

visionSynergy’s YouTube channel contains a growing library of more than 50 network leader story videos including more than three hours of recordings drawn from interviews with experienced ministry leaders from around the world who share their personal insights on the practice of collaboration in Christian mission. Also available on the visionSynergy YouTube channel is a 12-hour video introduction to Kingdom Partnerships and a 10-part Partnership Essentials video series presented by Phill Butler.
  https://synergycommons.net/resources/partnership-future-world-mission/

● Synergy Commons Webinar Series 
  https://synergycommons.net/resources/category/webinar/

● visionSynergy Youtube Channel 
  https://youtube.com/visionsynergy

● Kingdom Partnerships 
  https://synr.gy/kingdompartnerships

● Partnership Essentials 
  https://synr.gy/partnershipessentials

**MINISTRY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCE SITES**

The following ministries work with Christian organizations around the world to develop effective networks and collaborative initiatives:


● Frontline Ministries. https://flministries.org/about/


These sites include a global directory of geographic and issue-focused mission networks (Linking Global Voices) and an online learning community for network leaders (Synergy Commons):


● Synergy Commons. https://synergycommons.net
SECULAR RESOURCES

1. Books on inter-organizational collaboration

These books outline comprehensive frameworks for developing nonprofit collaborations. The book from Mattessich complements the handbook from Winer and Ray as an in-depth analysis of 20 research-based factors that lead to success in collaboration.

2. Books on network leadership


3. Books on group facilitation and consensus decision-making

All networks involve numerous meetings, and those meetings sometimes involve very complex situations. If those meetings are not managed well - if group process, participation, facilitation, consensus, decision-making, and follow-through are lacking - then it is likely the network will achieve few (if any) results. The books in this group focus on these critical network development process skills.

4. Key articles, reports, and case studies

- “The Rise of the Network Leader - Reframing leadership in the new work environment.”

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact


- Milward, H. Brinton, Ph.D., Gail MacKean, Ann Casebeer, Janice Popp, and Dr. Ron Lindstrom.  

https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/PHEA_CASE_STUDY_1.PDF

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_dawn_of_system_leadership

5. Resources for network evaluation and funding


https://ssir.org/articles/entry/investing_in_networks_grows_impact


http://www.networkimpact.org/networkevaluation

6. Network leadership organizations and networks

- Collective Impact Forum
  https://collectiveimpactforum.org/
- Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC).
  https://interactioninstitute.org/?s=Network
- Net Weaver
  https://networkweaver.com/
- The International Association of Facilitation (IAF).
  https://www.iaf-world.org/site/
- Visible Network Labs (VNL)
  https://visiblenetworklabs.com/

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

Twitter feeds from network and movement practitioners.

- @VNetworkLabs
- @davehackett
- @NetworkWeaving
- @TPIGlobal
- @churchplanting
- @CIForumTweets
- @Sys_innovation
- @ThinkPartnering
- @GreaterTtSum
- @REACTPartnering
- @Network_Centric
- @visionsynergy