

The Purpose-Driven Journey

Introducing the Purposeship Approach

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The Purpose-Driven Journey: A Word from the Authors

As we look back on the development of this project, we find ourselves admiring the true collaboration, frustration, uncertainty, and enthusiasm that it took to bring three very different perspectives into a single and shared vision. Initially, we saw our diverse experiences as a problem. Ultimately, we learned that they were the key to the solution.

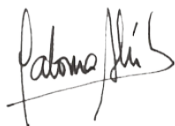
Each of us have interacted with cross-sector relationships in different ways. Paloma's understanding grew out of her experience working with the public sector as the founder of a Spanish civil society organization and as a grassroots community organizer in Nicaragua. Andrea's experience as a bank executive in Brazil formed the basis for her private sector view. Kelly's perspective was born out of her hybrid experience in both worlds as a non-profit consultant on corporate responsibility in the United States.

Despite these differences, we identified the clear destination — the completion of a final project. We knew that the task would require us to integrate our distinct experiences, yet underestimated the countless conversations and realizations it would take (individually and collectively) to reach this destination.


Arriving to the model presented to you in the following pages was a long and somewhat difficult journey. It was a journey that involved a deep understanding of ourselves and each other, the intention to critically analyze the field and develop a compelling solution, and the curiosity to question ourselves and to think outside of the box as we wrestled with the challenges (and opportunities) of development. It is these three qualities — understanding, intention, and curiosity — that became the principles for our collaboration.

We soon realized that these principles were more important to our decision-making process than the plans we had developed; the journey had become more important than the destination. This realization formed the basis for Purposeship, which is a collaborative model that recognizes the diverse needs, interests, and experiences of partners and honors them through a principles-based approach. As we engaged in the collective and iterative process of a clarifying a shared vision for development, each of us individually became the subjects of our own inquiry. Together, we held the keys to the answer.

In the end, we learned that the purpose-driven journey may be flexible, adaptable, and often unpredictable — but most importantly, we realized that it must be shared.



Paloma Andrés Urrutia



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Preface

Cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development has enormous potential. It has the capacity to bring targeted resources and diverse skills together to address some of the biggest challenges facing our world. To maximize impact and mitigate risks, these resources are often expertly funneled through a series of contractual agreements, implementation procedures, and monitoring systems. However, these rigid processes required by funders, grantees, and contractors alike tend to overlook the dynamic nature of the very social and environmental issues they are aiming to address. As the sustainable development community continues to wrestle with strategies for building a better world, perhaps we should pause and take a lesson from nature itself.

Consider for a moment how flocks of birds are able to fly with such astounding coordination and alignment. Although comprised of thousands of independent bodies, the flock moves as one, reacting in unison to unpredictable changes in geography, topography, wind currents, and even potential predators. Scientists discovered that there is no single leader in a flock, but that a leader emerges depending on the direction the flock needs to go. Scientists also determined that only three rules govern their movement:

- maintain a minimum distance from your neighbor;
- fly at the same speed as your neighbor; and
- always turn towards the center.¹

It is through these three simple principles that thousands of birds are able to see, respond, and move as though they were one organism.

This is the spirit with which we approach development. To make development work, the rules need not be procedural, chronological, or prioritized. Rather, they should be principled, interchangeable, interdependent, and ever-present. Similar to the flock of birds, leaders in development should not be predicted, self-appointed, or voted upon. Leaders should be chosen by the environment and its circumstances. Individuals should be moved to lead because he or she has the timely, appropriate, and relevant capacity to do so.

All too often we reject the natural ways in which humans, communities, and the environment relate. Our global ecosystem is in constant motion and its inhabitants are marked by their instincts to survive, to grow, and to prosper. Our approaches for enabling development and prosperity should be similarly dynamic — anticipating and responding to emergent problems and solutions in real-time.

It is with this reverence for nature and an enthusiasm for a better world that we present the principles-based approach of Purposeship.

Executive Summary

Cross-sector collaboration has become one of the most widely celebrated mechanisms for delivering sustainable development because it enables groups to pool targeted resources and maximize success. However, a majority of these relationships are being conducted through the model of partnerships in which internal challenges impede the ability to achieve intended impacts. Surprisingly, these challenges are not often a lack of resources or solutions, but rather concern the operational and relational aspects of bringing together diverse constituents.

The most successful relationships are those that are based in trust. The barriers to building trust in partnerships include the difficulty of merging the motives, languages, and cultures of diverse sectors; the issue of competition among parties with differing views; the complications in agreeing on management and measurement strategies; and the perennial obstacles of politics. Ironically, partnerships attempt to address these relational challenges with operational adjustments and procedures, which often fail in tackling the root problem.

This leads us to some key questions: How is trust in cross-sector collaboration built and maintained? What does it take to bring together diverse groups to effectively deliver sustainable development? How might these groups work together to provide the critical resources needed to meet development goals? And how might these groups work together to transform organizational behavior and address institutional justice in the process?

To answer these questions, we initially set out to create a toolkit for civil society organizations (CSOs) to form meaningful partnerships with corporations. We felt that if we could provide CSOs with tools, they would be better positioned to engage corporations in development. We found two problems with this approach: first, CSOs were not the only actors that needed to improve, and second, tools were not the appropriate mechanism for improving relationships.

As a result, we established an alternative model for cross-sector collaboration called Purposeship, based in three principles of Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality. Rather than creating a procedural toolkit, we walked away having created the Purposeship Principles Standard, a guide for building meaningful cross-sector relationships that is directed at all sectors.

This paper sets the foundation for the Purposeship Principles Standard.

The Partnership Model: Is It Working?

The cross-sector collaboration approach has grown out of a response to the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges of the 21st century. The demand for innovative solutions and the pressure of the economic recession have exacerbated this complexity and have brought the public sector, the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) closer together than ever before. This shift has led development practitioners to assert that cross-sector relationships are not only a pathway to advancing “today’s development agenda, but [they also] hold the keys to scaling the most successful of those projects in the future”.²

For the public sector, cross-sector collaborations bring new resources, improve services, and boost efficiency. For corporations, such relationships are “increasingly relevant to the business agenda...[as] they enhance understanding and lead to better business practices”. Cross-sector collaboration also benefits the private sector in terms of “increasing employee engagement, entering new markets with new products and services, and responding to increased sustainability/triple-bottom-line reporting requirements”.³ In the case of CSOs, working in cross-sector relationships “support[s] mission delivery” and provides critical resources and expertise that CSOs are otherwise unable to generate. These collaborations also provide CSOs with new strategic inroads with governments and corporations that can lead CSOs to engage in institutional changes in the business-as-usual agenda, which often is a root cause of systemic inequality and a key goal for CSO activity. Lastly, effective cross-sector relationships have the potential to bring innovative and inclusive solutions that empower the global community to join in and address the challenges of sustainable development themselves.

The Challenges of Partnerships

The partnership model has been the most commonly adopted structure for facilitating cross-sector relationships. Despite the benefits described above, there are some critical differences in approach, language, and culture that complicate the foundation of trust that is required for partnership. In general, partnerships are project-oriented and focused on short-term deliverables. They are often geared toward the attainment of predetermined goals and lead to narrow and time-bound relationships. Given that systemic change has rarely appeared as a result of this approach, it seems as though a narrow focus on the goal is subordinating the relationships required to achieve it. Is it possible that the development community is too focused on the ends and not enough on the means?

Let us shift the focus to the actors in these relationships, each of which have their own challenges in partnerships: the public sector, the private sector, and civil society. The public sector naturally interfaces with the private sector and civil society because of its fundamental role in legislation, administration, and arbitration. The public sector has historically engaged in bilateral relationships with the other sectors. These partnerships have experienced a lack of efficiency due to bureaucracy (operational) and a lack of trust due to corruption (relational).

Although the public sector has been more historically involved in the partnership space, the challenges of the 21st century have given way to more direct partnerships between the private sector and civil society organizations. Given the contentious relationship between these sectors, this shift has brought new challenges and opportunities to the development agenda.

Many CSOs are still “ambivalent about their business partnerships; not as ‘transparent’ as they like to think they are; nervous about losing other forms of resource support because of

perceptions of other donors”; and hesitant to share their successful partnerships for fear that other CSOs will steal their models and approaches.⁴ Additionally, CSOs tend to view corporations as rigid, self-serving and untrustworthy.

The private sector is facing increased demand for responsible and sustainable practices which often require their engagement with a field with which they are not familiar. As such, corporations often lack, ignore, or deny the knowledge and expertise it takes to deliver these expectations. On the other hand, the private sector has legitimate reservations about cross-sector collaboration, particularly given its historical relationship with whistle-blowing CSOs. The private sector witnesses the intense in-fighting and competition among CSOs, which are often distracted by aggressive market differentiation and under-resourced management challenges rather than looking for common solutions. Finally, corporations recognize that the CSO community is overly fragmented and may be missing key innovations due to a lack of strategic consolidation.

As a result of these differences, CSOs often perceive corporations’ interest in partnership as a shallow greenwashing mechanism. On the other hand, corporations tend to view CSOs’ intentions as a mere funding generator rather than a true impact maximizer.

Even if corporations and CSOs overcome these barriers and partner together, there remains the pervasive concern over the balance of power. If not addressed, misunderstandings of the power dynamic can lead to high transaction costs in terms of project management and impact. Kumi Naidoo, head of Greenpeace International, shares some important insights about this imbalance:

“The first thing about trust is to be open about the power differential in play... If I am sitting with Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, a person whom I have a very high level of respect for, we are not sitting as equals. My pockets are nowhere near personally or institutionally as deep and my access to power only can come from mobilizing mass public opinion...Paul and I did not create the power realities; we don't have to be apologetic about it but we do need to acknowledge it and understand it. There is no point pretending we are all equal and we are all in it together”.⁵

CSOs are resistant to acknowledging this reality, as it seems as though it may be an abandonment of their role to challenge the power of corporations. Naidoo understands this sentiment and recognizes that this requires a deep shift in the mindset of the third sector, yet asks CSOs to take the “jump into the unknown and recognize [that] the current system of doing business is broken and if [CSOs] want to actually protect the core entity of business into the long term, they have to adapt or die”.⁶

These are difficult words for the CSO community to take in, especially from one of its most iconic leaders. Is it true that CSOs must adapt or die? Perhaps the more important question is — Does adaptation require the submission of power?

The Need for a New Way Forward

The challenges facing partnerships are not about skills or resources. They are about breakdowns in power and perception, which lead to dysfunctional relationships. The new way forward requires a conscious effort in relationship-building. It demands that partners view their differing perspectives as a source of strength. Cross-sector relationships will work only when each party understands one another and appreciates what each can offer. This initial leap of faith, required by all parties, has the potential to produce the impact that our global community desperately needs. Who should take the initial jump?

CSOs as Agents for Change

Let us not forget that CSOs have played a critical role throughout history in transforming society. From the abolitionist movement to carbon emissions regulation, CSOs have consistently pushed business and government to adjust its practices for the better. The journey may be painstakingly slow, but CSOs have been the drivers of impressive and radical changes to some the most unshakable institutions and entrenched business practices our society has ever witnessed. Although CSOs continue to “act as forms of distributed intelligence and conscience in the market place”, few CSOs have the confidence that it is possible to do so through cross-sector partnerships.⁷ Furthermore, the increasingly complex challenges facing the human family require massive “system-level changes...to build sustainable economies” and CSOs would be wise to build on its history of inspiring institutional change and explore how their “efforts could best be deployed to this end”.⁸

The global community is emphatically calling for the engagement of CSOs in business and governments. Cross-sector collaboration may provide the strategic opportunity to do so. Studies show that the public’s trust in CSOs on issues of the environment, human rights, and health is more than double the amount of trust placed in any other sector (governments, corporations, and media).⁹ In the case of human rights, for example, 59% of the public look to CSOs for reliable research and solutions, whereas 13% trust the government, 14% trust the media, and only 4% trust corporations.¹⁰ This gives CSOs the legitimacy and the responsibility to make the initial leap to a new model for social change.

Despite this potential, CSOs underestimate their role. The research shows that while CSOs underrate their own effectiveness, corporations find partnerships with CSOs to be significantly effective in bettering their business practices. A 2012 study on corporate-CSO partnerships by C&E Advisory revealed that:

“78% of [CSO] respondents (compared to 91% of business respondents) state that partnerships between the sectors improve business understanding of social and environmental issues. And 50% of [CSO] respondents (compared to 57% of their corporate peers) state that such key partnerships help to change business practices for the better”.¹¹

As much as we see a role for the private sector in contributing to development, this data asserts that they cannot do it alone. CSOs are desperately needed in order to “fill in relationships, knowledge, and resource gaps” for corporations and governments as they develop better practices and positively contribute to the global triple bottom line.¹²

If the other sectors find partnerships with CSOs to be beneficial to changing their practices for the better and civil society is demanding the engagement of CSOs to ensure as much, then why

are CSOs so reluctant to engage? C&E Advisory's analysis of over 130 leading companies and CSOs reveals a potential answer:

"The largest divergence between the sectors in the 2012 Barometer arose when [CSOs] and corporate respondents are asked about how [CSOs] are perceived by companies. Nearly three quarters (74%) of business respondents agreed that 'on the whole, CSOs are effective, professional entities with which companies can do business' (only 6% of corporate respondents disagreed with this view). Conversely, only a small majority of [CSO] respondents (42%) agreed that 'on the whole, [CSOs] are considered by companies to be effective, professional entities with which they do business'. And nearly a quarter of [CSO] respondents (23%) disagreed with this statement".¹³

This evidence illuminates a striking and surprising breakdown in the effectiveness of partnerships — the CSO's perception of itself. As C&E Advisory suggests, this dissonance "may indicate either ineffective communication between the sectors and/or a lack of confidence by the CSO sector in its own professionalism and effectiveness".¹⁴ It seems as though CSOs desperately need to assert their expertise, more effectively communicate with their partners, and exercise their talents in what they strive to do best — serving society.

CSOs must own their expertise in the "business" of development and view it as an opportunity to create systemic change from the inside.

Making the Leap from Partnership to Purposeship

The expertise that CSOs possess in the "business" of development is a result of the relationships they have been able to build with communities. The core of their business is to work closely over the long-term to create value for communities with intention, respect, and flexibility. Corporations place high value on their relationships with clients, as the core of their business is to create value for shareholders. The public sector focuses on its relationships with its constituents with the mission to create value for society. Each sector knows how to maintain good relationships. Each sector also knows how to create value. What they often do not know is how to maintain good relationships through partnership that could lead to even greater value. Why?

As evidenced in nature, most relationships are born out of reciprocal benefits. Partnerships tend to exclusively focus on an external altruistic aim (the development goal) rather than including formal consideration of the development opportunities for each partner. This narrow focus on the goal often leads to transactional, procedural, and project-based development with a shallow level of partner engagement.

Nature reminds us that engagement itself is the starting point. It reminds us that organisms work together because they generate mutually beneficial outcomes. Since the current partnership model does not overtly address these outcomes, such priorities are often converted into hidden agendas and compromise transparency and trust — key components for the foundation of a good relationship.

Introducing the Purposeship Approach

The model of Purposeship seeks to reclaim the foundations for a good relationship, reestablishing transparency and trust as indispensable values for cross-sector collaboration. In order to embrace this new model, all three sectors must engage in relationships that are flexible and responsive to emergent needs and solutions (the Foundational Principle of Adaptability), be accountable for their own unique role in promoting development (the Principle of Utility) and contribute to the development goals of each partner (the Principle of Mutuality).

Purposeship asserts that the intentional, conscious, and even uncertain journey toward solving a problem is more important than the assumptive strategies of traditional partnerships. This is precisely because Purposeship recognizes that pre-determined solutions run against the course of nature itself, which is in constant motion. The concept of Purposeship humbly recognizes that there is no single solution to these problems, and that even if there were a solution, no single individual or organization would be equipped to effectively address it.

Purposeship opens up the space for transparent engagement and trust-building, enabling partners to develop one another in the process and contribute to systemic change.

Changing the Language of Partnerships

The language of partnerships has been useful for elevating cross-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches into the mainstream development agenda. However, the pervasive breakdowns in this approach have since made the partnership vocabulary diluted, tired, and confusing. Moreover, the diversity of partners and programs that have operated under this umbrella term have made it a dangerous catch-all for describing a broad spectrum of collaborative activities. This breakdown has blurred partners' understanding of what a partnership is, in which some may view it as a shared value approach, whereas others in the same partnership may simply see it as an updated term for a traditional donor-grantee relationship. In order to take partnerships to the next level, there is a need to change the game. To do it right, we must change the name.

The language of Purposeship elicits for-purpose relationships and affirms that building them is just as important as achieving the development goal. Because relationships take work, Purposeship requires partners (now agents) to be actively engaged instead of being passive suppliers.

Key Terms for Purposeship

- **Agent** — A party that actively embraces and applies the Principles of Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality in the context of a Purposeship.
- **Purpose** — The vision that drives the Purposeship.
- **Purposeship** — A principles-based model for cross-sector collaboration in which agents embrace Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality in order to achieve a Shared Purpose.
- **Shared Purpose** — The agents' common understanding and commitment to fulfilling the Purpose (Utility Principle) and to enhancing development opportunities for all agents (Mutuality Principle).

What Makes Purposeship Different

Purposeship fully embraces the concept of Collective Impact, in which agents first agree on a common understanding of the problem, identify common indicators to hold themselves accountable to, and then enable the process itself to reveal emergent solutions.¹⁵

However, the Purposeship model is different in that it extends the notion of Collective Impact back to the agents themselves. Because Purposeship draws much of its inspiration from nature, the model asserts that all agents within the Purposeship should be positively impacted from the experience — just like any healthy relationship. In practice, this means that each agent in the Purposeship has the duty and the responsibility to share, promote, and enhance

beneficial outcomes for other agents in addition to the fulfillment of the Purpose. In this sense, Purposeship requires a commitment to Shared Purpose, in which all agents work toward beneficial impacts for the Purpose as well as for the other agents involved (the Principles of Utility and Mutuality).

Perhaps one of the most straightforward ways to describe the difference between partnership and Purposeship is the concept of “going together” versus “growing together” (See Figure 1). Partnerships focus on the task of “going together” by bringing a group of organizations to the starting line and moving in unison toward a development goal. Purposeships view agents at different starting lines of their own, dependent on their own development. Additionally, Purposeships do not necessarily require the full participation of all agents to walk alongside one another throughout the process; it is understood that targeted resources will be employed when the emergent solutions call for them.

Given that CSOs are in the business of development, they have the expertise to catalyze the shift to Purposeship.

In the case of traditional partnerships, CSOs tend to act as project managers, monitoring the pre-determined procedures of partners in the achievement of the development goal. On the other hand, the Purpose-Driven CSO views agents through the lens of a relationship manager and tends to an ever-changing portfolio of the resources, capacities, and needs of each agent.

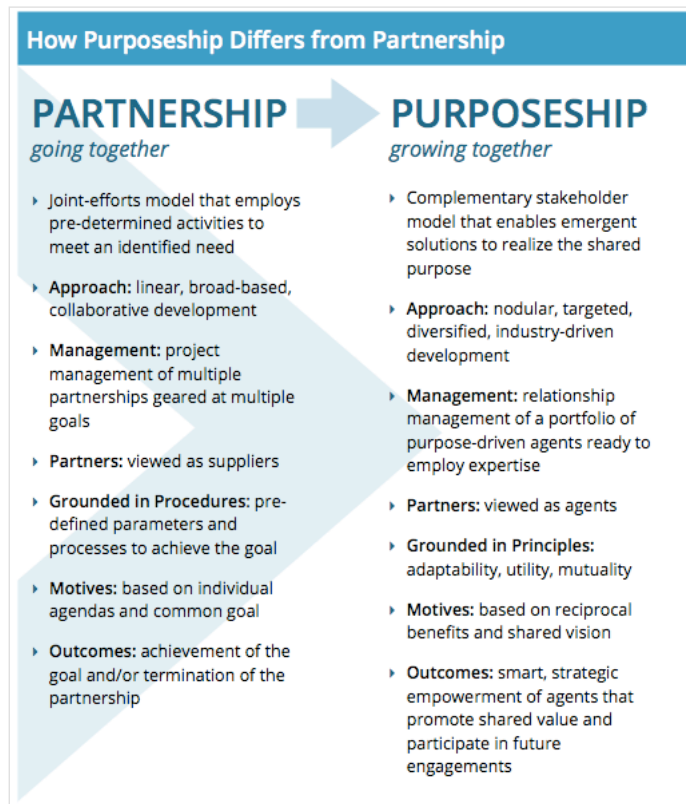


Figure 1. How Purposeship Differs from Partnership

This enables these CSOs to match emergent solutions with targeted resources, while also staying abreast of the individual developmental opportunities for each agent. Given this portfolio approach, Purpose-Driven CSOs operate by tracking resources and needs in a more flexible and nodular way, rather than through standardized and linear means.

To illustrate, Figure 2 represents the traditional project management model that CSOs typically employ. In this model, CSOs assign single or multi-stakeholder partners to individual projects that connect with their mission. Partners essentially become suppliers and the CSO is generally not strategically aware of their partners' individual development goals. As a result, partners are less committed to the delivery of the resource and CSOs may rely on contractual arrangements or memorandums of understanding to ensure their dedication. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the CSO identifies a variety of projects, manages a series of corresponding partners that deliver the required resources, and anticipates that the projects uniformly and comprehensively contribute to the organization's mission. The focus of this kind of CSO often becomes project management rather than mission delivery.

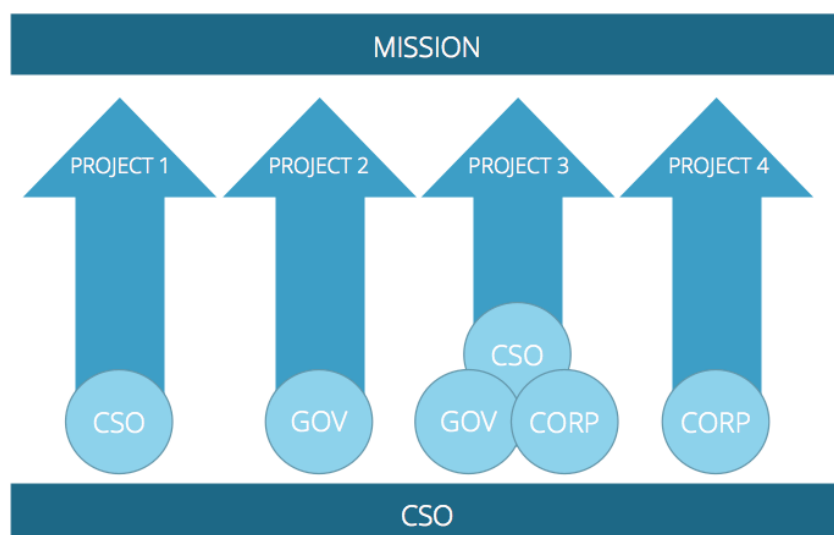


Figure 2. The Traditional Partnership Management Model

The Purpose-Driven CSO looks beyond the partner's role as a predictable supplier and instead focuses on their dynamic contributions to emergent solutions. Beyond having an understanding of the strategic resources partners can provide to achieve the mission, this kind of CSO is also keenly aware of the development opportunities and interests of each partner. By going one level deeper and recognizing the various developmental needs of partners, Purpose-Driven CSOs effectively transform the partner relationship from one of *supply* to one of *agency*, in which partners (now agents) are invited to share their own development goals as well as identify their potential contributions to the Shared Purpose. By empowering agents to share needs and identify solutions, CSOs are able to pool new knowledge and resources while simultaneously giving back to agents by incorporating their development goals into the Purposeship. As such, the Purpose-Driven CSO recognizes that agents (such as communities, other CSOs, corporations, and government entities) each possess a spectrum of ever-changing needs and resources.

Figure 3 shows the management model of the Purpose-Driven CSO, in which two-dimensional nodes (representing agents) are more reflective of the needs and resources at any given time.

Driven by the Shared Purpose and supported by the Principles of Purposeship, the Purpose-Driven CSO does not observe nodes as fixed in place, but sees them as constantly moving in order to best identify and respond to emergent solutions and opportunities.

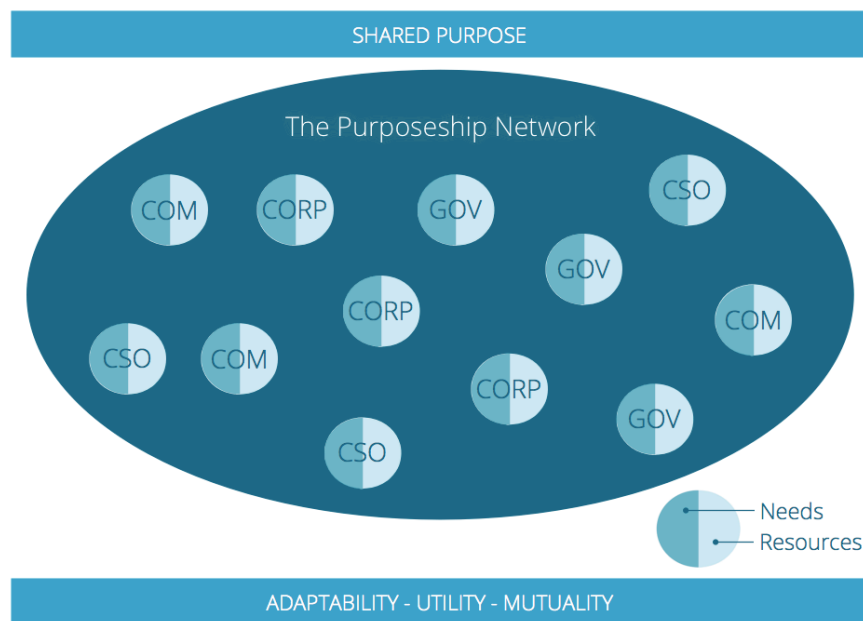


Figure 3. The Purpose-Driven Management Model

One strength of this approach is the recognition that each agent has needs and resources relative to other agents, rather than the traditional partnership approach which views agents as natural recipients or suppliers. In the case of Purposeship, agents are not limited to these distinctions and therefore transcend former power imbalances. For example, the Purposeship model recognizes that communities are much more than beneficiaries — they are dynamic contributors to the development needs of other agents.

Adopting a Purpose-Driven approach disarms an additional power struggle: when agents are committed to the development opportunities for other agents, the Purposeship can transparently identify and facilitate transformative development. By doing so, Purposeship encourages all agents to be drivers of the Purposeship and share ownership of the engagement process. It is these kinds of relationships — based in trust, transparency and commitment — that can lead to meaningful systemic change.

The Principles of Purposeship

Adaptability is what defines the Purposeship space. As such, all activities that occur within the Purposeship are based in this foundational principle. The Principles of Utility and Mutuality are brought to the foreground, representing the functional role of Purposeship. When put into practice, agents track the feedback loops of the functional principles, monitoring the push-and-pull between the two to ensure the balance of equitable outcomes for the Purpose and the agents themselves.

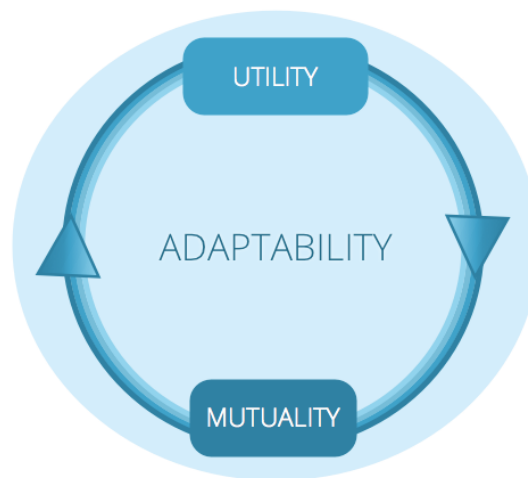


Figure 4. The Principles of Purposeship

It is understood that the Principles of Purposeship are constitutive in that all agents that enter into the Purposeship space are required to adopt and demonstrate a commitment to the principles in their own right. Once operating in the Purposeship space, these principles also serve a facilitative role, meaning that they provide the basis for interaction between agents throughout the Purposeship and guide all activities within.

Adaptability

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change." — Charles Darwin

Principle

Agents shall consciously adapt to achieve the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Adaptability is the capacity to consciously adjust ideas and behaviors in strategic response to changing circumstances. It is based on continuous learning and improved understanding. As a natural process that is characteristic of any evolving organism, Adaptability is a key capacity for an organization to develop, to survive, and to accomplish its goals. In the case of Purposeship, Adaptability is the foundational characteristic required of all agents, demonstrating that each is fundamentally committed to a constant and intentional analysis of themselves and their environment. This enables agents to identify and respond to emergent solutions and remain aligned with the Shared Purpose.

Application

An agent that is fundamentally committed to Adaptability not only engages in adaptive behavior, but does so at a conscious and proactive level. The adaptable agent views this as a strategy in itself and finds success in regularly measuring and responding to stakeholder demands and needs. Adaptable agents embrace ambiguity as part of a continuous learning process and focus on improving their capacity to adapt accordingly.

The adaptable agent is able to adapt because it has determined its core essence and stays true to its values, even in an ever-changing environment. This agent has an understanding of its non-negotiables and ensures that adaptability does not infringe upon them.

Criteria

An agent that embraces the Adaptability Principle shall:

- Commit to conscious adaptation, which is central to survival and to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose;
- Monitor the environment within the Purposeship (the Shared Purpose), as well as beyond the Purposeship (own environment and stakeholders);
- Analyze and incorporate relevant knowledge and understanding; and,
- Respond by adapting thinking and actions as needed to fulfill the Shared Purpose.

Utility

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." — Aristotle

Principle

Agents shall contribute to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Utility describes the capacity to generate benefits that satisfy needs. The level of Utility is determined by the effectiveness of the efforts and resources used to meet needs. In the Purposeship context, the relationship of the needs with the unique resources of each agent determines the timing, scope, and relevance of each agent's contribution in the achievement of the Shared Purpose. Given their shared commitment to Utility, agents are compelled to contribute in the most practical, beneficial, and efficient way.

Application

The Utility Principle describes the relevance of each agent's unique contribution to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose. Contribution is defined as insights and resources that an agent can bring, as well as changes to the agent's own organizational strategy and behavior that align with the Shared Purpose. Because Utility is concerned with the quality and timely fulfillment of the Shared Purpose, Utility is used to measure and confirm the indispensability and impact of each agent's individual contribution.

The Utility Principle determines the ideal level of efforts and strategic resources that each agent is capable of contributing to the Shared Purpose. Given the complexity of challenges in pursuit of the Shared Purpose, it is understood that agents are encouraged to determine their own

Utility as well. This means that agents actively engage in the identification and evaluation of their contributions to efficiently and effectively fulfill the Shared Purpose.

Beyond identifying the type of contribution, Utility also dictates the ideal scope and timing of the agent's contribution. It recognizes the ways in which emergent needs and solutions can challenge an agent's ability to deliver. The Utility Principle mitigates this challenge by aligning each agent's expertise with needs early on in the Purposeship. By tapping into each agent's most powerful assets and capacities, the Utility Principle eases the issue of emergent needs and solutions and empowers agents to deliver what they do best. As such, Utility requires that each agent is aware of the value of their contributions and makes the appropriate preparations to deploy them as needed in the context of the Purposeship.

The Utility Principle ensures that all activities geared at fulfilling the Shared Purpose are consistently useful. Given the evolution of the Shared Purpose and the agent's abilities to fulfill it, the Utility Principle is what determines the active contributions of particular agents, the dormancy of other agents, and the introduction of new agents to the Purposeship.

Criteria

An agent that embraces the Utility Principle shall:

- Commit to contributing to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose;
- Understand that contributions are defined as insights and resources that an agent can bring to the Purposeship, as well as changes to the agent's own organizational strategy and behavior that align with the Shared Purpose;
- Identify contributions that the Shared Purpose requires from all agents, including itself, and consider suggestions from other agents about its own contributive capacities;
- Enable the Purposeship to ensure the usefulness of all agents' unique contributions and commit to providing its own contributions in the most practical, beneficial, and efficient way; and,
- Recognize that the contributions to the Shared Purpose vary in timing and scope.

Mutuality

"All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." — Martin Luther King, Jr.

Principle

Agents shall intentionally enhance beneficial outcomes for the other agents in pursuit of the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Mutuality is the quality or state of interactions in which each agent benefits. As a natural evolution of cooperation, mutual interactions give way to interdependent and enduring relationships. In the Purposeship context, Mutuality enables the interdependent beneficial outcomes generated through the Purposeship that are valuable to agents. As such, benefits are intentionally reinforced by agents in order to stimulate the meaningful engagement of others and promote mutual development for themselves.

Application

The Mutuality Principle describes the symbiotic nature of the Purposeship that empowers agents to concurrently develop while pursuing the purpose. It facilitates the concept of “growing together”, which not only encourages agents to meaningfully contribute, but also lays the foundation for the positive transformation of each agent.

Through engaging in the Purposeship, agents can expect to attain beneficial outcomes and consequently understand and promote the development interests of other agents. Through this understanding comes the opportunity for agents to proactively address each other’s expectations for development. By openly engaging in mutual development, agents may improve transparency in the relationship, avoiding “hidden agendas” and building trust.

Importantly, the Mutuality Principle causes agents to be more invested in the pursuit of the Purpose. Agents understand that by contributing through the Purposeship, they are increasing beneficial outcomes for themselves.

Criteria

An agent that embraces the Mutuality Principle shall:

- Commit to the mutual development of agents as an integral component of the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose;
- Understand that all agents have the right to receive beneficial outcomes from the Purposeship;
- Identify beneficial outcomes that the Purposeship can provide for all agents, including itself, and consider suggestions from other agents about its own development; and,
- Enable the Purposeship to ensure the equity of agents’ beneficial outcomes and that it corresponds with the expectations of each agent.

Conclusion

Purposeships empower a network of relationships that are smart, strategic, and sensitive to emergent solutions. Lines of communication are open in all directions and agents are empowered to share ideas for growing together toward the Shared Purpose. Inspired by natural law and by the dynamic ways in which organisms interact, Purposeship is sensitive to the dynamism of development and enables agents to respond to emergent needs and solutions in real-time.

Let us not forget that just like a flock of birds, relationships can be guided by three simple principles: trust your neighbor, fly together, and when the destination is uncertain, always turn toward the center.

This is the power of Purposeship.

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The Purposeship Principles Standard

A Guide for Purpose-Driven, Cross-Sector Relationships

Paloma Andrés Urrutia • Kelly Elizabeth Behrend • Andrea Mara Hanai



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The Purposeship Principles Standard: A Guide for Purpose-Driven, Cross-Sector Relationships

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Introduction

The Purpose-Driven Journey

Cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development has enormous potential. It has the capacity to bring targeted resources and diverse skills together to address some of the biggest challenges facing our world. To maximize impact and mitigate risks, these resources are often expertly funneled through a series of contractual agreements, implementation procedures, and monitoring systems. However, these rigid processes required by funders, grantees, and contractors alike tend to overlook the dynamic nature of the very social and environmental issues they are aiming to address. As the sustainable development community continues to wrestle with strategies for building a better world, perhaps we should pause and take a lesson from nature itself.

Consider for a moment how flocks of birds are able to fly with such astounding coordination and alignment. Although comprised of thousands of independent bodies, the flock moves as one, reacting in unison to unpredictable changes in geography, topography, wind currents, and even potential predators. Scientists discovered that there is no single leader in a flock, but that a leader emerges depending on the direction the flock needs to go. Scientists also determined that only three rules govern their movement:

- maintain a minimum distance from your neighbor;
- fly at the same speed as your neighbor; and
- always turn towards the center.¹

It is through these three simple principles that thousands of birds are able to see, respond, and move as though they were one organism. This is the spirit with which we approach development. To make development work, the rules need not be procedural, chronological, or prioritized. Rather, they should be principled, interchangeable, interdependent, and ever-present. Similar to the flock of birds, leaders in development should not be predicted, self-appointed, or voted upon. Leaders should be chosen by the environment and its circumstances. Individuals should be moved to lead because he or she has the timely, appropriate, and relevant capacity to do so.

All too often we reject the natural ways in which humans, communities, and the environment relate. Our global ecosystem is in constant motion and its inhabitants are marked by their instincts to survive, to grow, and to prosper. Our approaches for enabling development and prosperity should be similarly dynamic — anticipating and responding to emergent problems and solutions in real-time. It is with this reverence for nature and an enthusiasm for a better world that we present the principles-based approach of Purposeship.

¹ Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed*, Random House Canada, 2006.

Glossary

Agent

A party that actively embraces and applies the Principles of Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality in the context of a Purposeship.

Purpose

The vision that drives the Purposeship.

Purposeship

A principles-based model for cross-sector collaboration in which agents embrace Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality in order to achieve a Shared Purpose.

Shared Purpose

The agents' common understanding and commitment to fulfilling the Purpose (Utility Principle) and to enhancing development opportunities for all agents (Mutuality Principle).

The Purposeship Approach

What is Purposeship?

Purposeship is a model for cross-sector collaboration in which agents embrace the Principles of Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality in order to achieve a Shared Purpose.

Purposeship asserts that the intentional, conscious, and even uncertain journey toward solving a problem is more important than the assumptive strategies of traditional partnerships. This is precisely because Purposeship recognizes that pre-determined solutions run against the course of nature itself, which is in constant motion. This understanding is what forms the basis for Purposeship's Foundational Principle of Adaptability.

The concept of Purposeship humbly recognizes that there is no single solution to these problems, and that even if there were a solution, no single individual or organization would be equipped to effectively address it. As such, Purposeship fully embraces the concept of Collective Impact, in which agents first agree on a common understanding of the problem, identify common indicators to hold themselves accountable to, and then enable the process itself to reveal emergent solutions.

To learn more about **Collective Impact**, refer to John Kania and Mark Kramer's [article](#), *Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses Complexity*.

The Purposeship model is different in that it extends the notion of Collective Impact back to the agents themselves. Because Purposeship draws much of its inspiration from nature, the model asserts that all agents within the Purposeship should be positively impacted from the experience — just like any healthy relationship. In practice, this means that each agent in the Purposeship has the duty and the responsibility to share, promote, and enhance beneficial outcomes for other agents in addition to the fulfillment of the Purpose. In this sense, Purposeship requires a commitment to Shared Purpose, in which all agents work toward beneficial impacts for the Purpose as well as for the other agents involved (the Principles of Utility and Mutuality).

The Purposeship Approach

The Aim of Purposeship: Fulfilling the Shared Purpose

Shared Purpose is the agents' common understanding and commitment to fulfilling the Purpose (Utility Principle) and to enhancing development opportunities for all agents (Mutuality Principle).

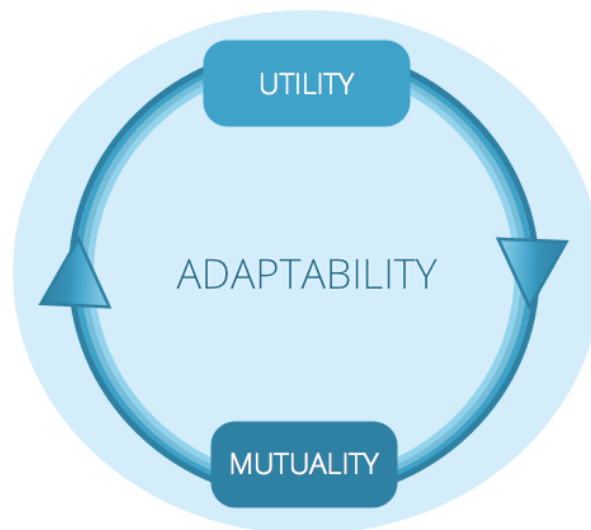
Adopting a Purpose-Driven approach disarms a formerly challenging power struggle within cross-sector relationships: when an agent is aware of the development opportunities for other agents, it is able to transparently guide them through the process. As such, agents have the power to transparently and actively contribute to one another's positive transformation. An additional benefit of this approach is that agents feel personally invested in the Purposeship, which ensures that they contribute targeted resources for the long-term in order to achieve equitable beneficial outcomes for both the Purpose and the agents themselves (together, this is considered the Shared Purpose). By incorporating development opportunities for agents, the Purposeship encourages all agents to share the ownership of the engagement process. Agents fundamentally embrace Adaptability and ensure that the feedback loops of Utility and Mutuality are in balance to provide equitable beneficial outcomes for the achievement of the Shared Purpose. This is the power of Purposeship.

The Principles

The Foundational Principle of Adaptability provides the space for emergent solutions, whereas the Functional Principles of Utility and Mutuality ensure beneficial outcomes for the Purpose and the agents. The Shared Purpose governs the relationship between the functional principles, providing the checks-and-balances to ensure that there are equitable benefits for the Purpose and for all agents involved.

How to Use the Principles

Adaptability is what defines the Purposeship space. As such, all activities that occur within the Purposeship are based in this foundational principle. The Principles of Utility and Mutuality are brought to the foreground, representing the functional role of Purposeship. When put into practice, agents track the feedback loops of the functional principles, monitoring the push-and-pull between the two to ensure the balance of equitable outcomes for the Purpose and the agents themselves.



It is understood that the Principles of Purposeship are constitutive in that all agents that enter into the Purposeship space are required to adopt and demonstrate a commitment to the principles in their own right. Once operating in the Purposeship space, these principles also serve a facilitative role, meaning that they provide the basis for interaction between agents throughout the Purposeship and guide all activities within.

Adaptability

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

— Charles Darwin

The Adaptability Principle

Agents shall consciously adapt to achieve the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Adaptability is the capacity to consciously adjust ideas and behaviors in strategic response to changing circumstances. It is based on continuous learning and improved understanding. As a natural process that is characteristic of any evolving organism, Adaptability is a key capacity for an organization to develop, to survive, and to accomplish its goals. In the case of Purposeship, Adaptability is the foundational characteristic required of all agents, demonstrating that each is fundamentally committed to a constant and intentional analysis of themselves and their environment. This enables agents to identify and respond to emergent solutions and remain aligned with the Shared Purpose.

Application

An agent that is fundamentally committed to Adaptability not only engages in adaptive behavior, but does so at a conscious and proactive level. The adaptable agent views this as a strategy in itself and finds success in regularly measuring and responding to stakeholder demands and needs. Adaptable agents embrace ambiguity as part of a continuous learning process and focus on improving their capacity to adapt accordingly.

The adaptable agent is able to adapt because it has determined its core essence and stays true to its values, even in an ever-changing environment. This agent has an understanding of its non-negotiables and ensures that adaptability does not infringe upon them.

Criteria

An agent that embraces the Adaptability Principle shall:

- Commit to conscious adaptation, which is central to survival and to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose;
- Monitor the environment within the Purposeship (the Shared Purpose), as well as beyond the Purposeship (own environment and stakeholders);
- Analyze and incorporate relevant knowledge and understanding; and,
- Respond by adapting thinking and actions as needed to fulfill the Shared Purpose.

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

— Aristotle

The Utility Principle

Agents shall contribute to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Utility describes the capacity to generate benefits that satisfy needs. The level of Utility is determined by the effectiveness of the efforts and resources used to meet needs. In the Purposeship context, the relationship of the needs with the unique resources of each agent determines the timing, scope, and relevance of each agent's contribution in the achievement of the Shared Purpose. Given their shared commitment to Utility, agents are compelled to contribute in the most practical, beneficial, and efficient way.

Application

The Utility Principle describes the relevance of each agent's unique contribution to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose. Contribution is defined as insights and resources that an agent can bring, as well as changes to the agent's own organizational strategy and behavior that align with the Shared Purpose. Because Utility is concerned with the quality and timely fulfillment of the Shared Purpose, Utility is used to measure and confirm the indispensability and impact of each agent's individual contribution.

The Utility Principle determines the ideal level of efforts and strategic resources that each agent is capable of contributing to the Shared Purpose. Given the complexity of challenges in pursuit of the Shared Purpose, it is understood that agents are encouraged to determine their own Utility as well. This means that agents actively engage in the identification and evaluation of their contributions to efficiently and effectively fulfill the Shared Purpose.

Beyond identifying the type of contribution, Utility also dictates the ideal scope and timing of the agent's contribution. It recognizes the ways in which emergent needs and solutions can challenge an agent's ability to deliver. The Utility Principle mitigates this challenge by aligning each agent's expertise with needs early on in the Purposeship. By tapping into each

agent's most powerful assets and capacities, the Utility Principle eases the issue of emergent needs and solutions and empowers agents to deliver what they do best. As such, Utility requires that each agent is aware of the value of their contributions and makes the appropriate preparations to deploy them as needed in the context of the Purposeship.

The Utility Principle ensures that all activities geared at fulfilling the Shared Purpose are consistently useful. Given the evolution of the Shared Purpose and the agent's abilities to fulfill it, the Utility Principle is what determines the active contributions of particular agents, the dormancy of other agents, and the introduction of new agents to the Purposeship.

Criteria

An agent that embraces the Utility Principle shall:

- Commit to contributing to the fulfillment of the Shared Purpose;
- Understand that contributions are defined as insights and resources that an agent can bring to the Purposeship, as well as changes to the agent's own organizational strategy and behavior that align with the Shared Purpose;
- Identify contributions that the Shared Purpose requires from all agents, including itself, and consider suggestions from other agents about its own contributive capacities;
- Enable the Purposeship to ensure the usefulness of all agents' unique contributions and commit to providing its own contributions in the most practical, beneficial, and efficient way; and,
- Recognize that the contributions to the Shared Purpose vary in timing and scope.

Mutuality

"All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

The Mutuality Principle

Agents shall intentionally enhance beneficial outcomes for the other agents in pursuit of the Shared Purpose.

Definition

Mutuality is the quality or state of interactions in which each agent benefits. As a natural evolution of cooperation, mutual interactions give way to interdependent and enduring relationships. In the Purposeship context, Mutuality enables the interdependent beneficial outcomes generated through the Purposeship that are valuable to agents. As such, benefits are intentionally reinforced by agents in order to stimulate the meaningful engagement of others and promote mutual development for themselves.

Application

The Mutuality Principle describes the symbiotic nature of the Purposeship that empowers agents to concurrently develop while pursuing the Purpose. It facilitates the concept of “growing together”, which not only encourages agents to meaningfully contribute, but also lays the foundation for the positive transformation of each agent.

Through engaging in the Purposeship, agents can expect to attain beneficial outcomes and consequently understand and promote the development interests of other agents. Through this understanding comes the opportunity for agents to proactively address each other’s expectations for development. By openly engaging in mutual development, agents may improve transparency in the relationship, avoiding “hidden agendas” and building trust.

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- Enable the Purposeship to ensure the equity of agents' beneficial outcomes and that it corresponds with the expectations of each agent.



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The Purpose-Driven Journey

Executive Summary

Paloma Andrés Urrutia • Kelly Elizabeth Behrend • Andrea Mara Hanai





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The Purpose-Driven Journey: Introducing the Purposeship Approach

Executive Summary

Paloma Andrés Urrutia • Kelly Elizabeth Behrend • Andrea Mara Hanai

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The Purpose-Driven Journey: A Word from the Authors

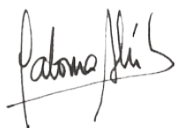
As we look back on the development of this project, we find ourselves admiring the true collaboration, frustration, uncertainty, and enthusiasm that it took to bring three very different perspectives into a single and shared vision. Initially, we saw our diverse experiences as a problem. Ultimately, we learned that they were the key to the solution.

Each of us have interacted with cross-sector relationships in different ways. Paloma's understanding grew out of her experience working with the public sector as the founder of a Spanish non-profit organization and as a grassroots community organizer in Nicaragua. Andrea's experience as a bank executive in Brazil formed the basis for her private sector view. Kelly's perspective was born out of her hybrid experience in both worlds as a non-profit consultant on corporate responsibility in the United States.


Despite these differences, we identified the clear destination – the completion of a final project. We knew that the task would require us to integrate our distinct experiences, yet underestimated the countless conversations and realizations it would take (individually and collectively) to reach this destination. Arriving to the model presented to you in the following pages was a long and somewhat difficult journey. It was a journey that involved a deep understanding of ourselves and each other, the intention to critically analyze the field and develop a compelling solution, and the curiosity to question ourselves and think outside of the box as we wrestled with the challenges (and opportunities) of development. It is these three qualities – understanding, intention, and curiosity – that became the tools for our collaboration.

We soon realized that these tools were more important to our decision-making process than the plans we had developed; the journey had become more important than the destination. As we engaged in the collective and iterative process of a clarifying a shared vision for development, each of us individually became the subjects of our own inquiry. Together, we held the keys to the answer.

In the end, we learned that the purpose-driven journey may be flexible, adaptable, and often unpredictable – but most importantly, we realized that it must be shared.



Paloma Andrés Urrutia



Kelly Elizabeth Behrend



Andrea Mara Hanai

1. Preface

Cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development has enormous potential. It has the capacity to bring targeted resources and diverse skills together to address some of the biggest challenges facing our world. To maximize impact and mitigate risks, these resources are often expertly funneled through a series of contractual agreements, implementation procedures, and monitoring systems. However, these rigid processes required by funders, grantees, and contractors alike tend to overlook the dynamic nature of the very social and environmental issues they are aiming to address.

All too often we reject the natural ways in which humans, communities, and the environment relate. Our global ecosystem is in constant motion and its inhabitants are marked by their instincts to survive, to grow, and to prosper. Our approaches for enabling development and prosperity should be similarly dynamic – anticipating and responding to emergent problems and solutions in real-time.

It is with this reverence for nature and an enthusiasm for a better world that we present the principles-based approach of Purposeship.

2. Introduction

Cross-sector collaboration has become one of the most widely celebrated mechanisms for delivering sustainable development because it enables groups to pool targeted resources and maximize success. However, a majority of these relationships are being conducted through partnerships in which internal challenges impede their ability to achieve intended impacts. Surprisingly, these challenges are not often a lack of resources or solutions, but rather concern the operational and relational aspects of bringing together diverse constituents.

The difficulties of these relationships include merging the motives, languages, and cultures of diverse sectors; the issue of competition or mistrust among parties with differing views; the barriers to agreeing on management and measurement strategies; and the perennial obstacles of politics.

This paper aims to address these issues and propose an alternative model for cross-sector collaborations called Purposeship. This strategic and flexible model is more responsive to the challenges of cross-sector collaboration, more effective for sustainable development,

and more conducive to the growth of all parties involved. Purposeship enables organizations to sharpen their engagement strategy, access key actors, maximize success, mitigate risks, and contribute to the institutional transformation of how others are addressing social and environmental issues.

3. Background

The cross-sector collaboration approach has grown out of a response to the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges of the 21st century. The demand for innovative solutions and the pressure of the economic recession have exacerbated this complexity and have brought the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) closer together than ever before. This shift has led development practitioners to assert that corporate-CSO relationships are not only a pathway to advancing “today’s development agenda, but [they also] hold the keys to scaling the most successful of those projects in the future”.¹ For corporations, such relationships are “increasingly relevant to the business agenda...[as] they enhance understanding and lead to better business practices”.² Cross-sector collaboration also benefits corporations in terms of “increasing employee engagement, entering new markets with new products and services, and responding to increased sustainability/triple-bottom-line reporting requirements”.³ In the case of CSOs, working with businesses “support[s] mission delivery” and provides critical resources and expertise that CSOs are otherwise unable to generate.⁴ Cross-sector relationships also provide CSOs with new strategic inroads with corporations that can lead them to engage in institutional changes in the business-as-usual agenda, which often is a root cause of systemic poverty and a key goal for CSO activity.

3.1 *The Challenges of Corporate-CSO Partnerships*

The partnership model has been the most commonly adopted structure for facilitating corporate-CSO relationships. Despite the benefits of cross-sector collaboration for both parties, there are some critical differences in approach, language, and culture that complicate the foundation of trust that is required for such partnerships. Many CSOs are still “ambivalent about their corporate partnerships; not as ‘transparent’ as they like to think they are; nervous about losing other forms of resource support because of perceptions of other donors that are funded by business”; and hesitant to share their successful business partnerships for fear other CSOs will steal their models and

approaches.⁵ Corporations have legitimate reservations as well, particularly given the contentious historical relationship between the private sector and whistle-blowing CSOs. Corporations also witness the intense in-fighting and competition among CSOs, which are often distracted by aggressive market differentiation and under-resourced management challenges rather than looking for common solutions. Finally, corporations recognize that the CSO community is overly fragmented and may be missing key innovations due to a lack of strategic consolidation.

Kumi Naidoo, head of Greenpeace International, recognizes that these differences create an imbalance of power and urges CSOs and corporations to make this imbalance known, expressing that “there is no point pretending we are all equal and we are all in it together”. He urges that CSOs “jump into the unknown and recognize [that] the current system of doing business is broken and if [CSOs] want to actually protect the core entity of business into the long term they have to adapt or die”.⁶

These are difficult words for the CSO community to take in, especially from one of its most iconic leaders. Is it true that CSOs must adapt or die? Perhaps the more important question is: Does adaptation require the submission of power?

Rather than viewing corporate-CSO relationships as a consent of power, CSOs must own their experience as experts in the “business” of development and view it as an opportunity to create systemic change from the inside. In order to truly meet the needs of our global community and affect the institutions that regulate it, CSOs and corporations must view their differing perspectives as a source of strength. Corporate-CSO relationships will work only when each party understands one another and appreciates what each can offer. This initial leap of faith, required by both parties, has the potential to produce the impact that our global community desperately needs.

3.2 The Need for A New Way Forward

Corporate-CSO relationships are considered among the leading solutions for addressing today’s development agenda. As such, CSOs must view themselves as critically important partners in the process. To do so, CSOs must embark on a journey toward self-actualization, viewing themselves as serious institutions with the capacity to “enter into co-created business-to-business relationships that entail [both] companies and [CSOs] becoming a key part of each other’s capacity to deliver value and vice versa”.⁷ It seems as though CSOs need to increase their effectiveness by being strategic and consistent with their stakeholders, raising the profile and scope of their relationships, and asserting their

role in not only delivering transformative impacts to communities, but also to other stakeholders with which they collaborate.

4. Introducing the Purposeship Approach

One failure of partnership may be its overt focus on the partners themselves, which tends to concentrate on the rules for their engagement and the expectations for their contributions. Michael Porter's work on Shared Value highlights an important way out of this narrow management strategy, reminding us that, "from society's perspective, it does not matter what types of organizations created the value. What matters is that benefits are delivered by those organizations—or combinations of organizations—that are best positioned to achieve the most impact for the least cost".⁸ Is it possible that partnerships have lost sense of their existence in the first place? The model of Purposeship seeks to reclaim this loss, asserting that partners are more effective if they collectively look toward the development goal itself – the Purpose – and agree on three basic principles for their interaction: Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality.

4.1 *Changing the Language of Partnerships*

This new way forward recognizes that the point of development is not the partners involved; it is the Purpose. If this is the case, then why would we continue using partner-centric strategy and terminology? This dynamic shift in approach calls for a new vocabulary.

The language of partnerships has been useful for elevating cross-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches into the mainstream development agenda. However, the pervasive breakdowns in this approach have since made the partnership vocabulary diluted, tired, and ineffective. Moreover, the diversity of partners and programs that have operated under this umbrella term have made it a dangerous catch-all for describing a broad spectrum of collaborative activities. This breakdown has blurred partners' understanding of what a partnership is, in which some may view it as a shared value approach whereas others in the same partnership may simply see it as an updated term for a traditional donor-grantee relationship. In order to take corporate-CSO partnerships to the next level, there is a need to change the game. To do it right, we must change the name.

4.2 What Makes Purposeship Different

Purposeship asserts that the intentional, conscious, and even uncertain journey toward solving a problem is more important than the assumptive strategies of traditional partnerships. This is precisely because Purposeship recognizes that pre-determined solutions run against the course of nature itself, which is in constant motion. This understanding is what forms the basis for Purposeship’s Foundational Principle of Adaptability.

The concept of Purposeship humbly recognizes that there is no single solution to these problems, and that even if there were a solution, no single individual or organization would be equipped to effectively address it. As such, Purposeship fully embraces the concept of Collective Impact, in which agents first agree on a common understanding of the problem, identify common indicators to hold themselves accountable to, and then enable the process itself to reveal emergent solutions.⁹

However, the Purposeship model is different in that it extends the notion of Collective Impact back to the agents themselves. Because Purposeship draws much of its inspiration from natural behavior, the model asserts that all agents within the Purposeship should be positively impacted from the experience – just like any healthy relationship. In practice, this means that each agent in the Purposeship has the duty and the responsibility to share, promote, and enhance beneficial outcomes for other agents as they work together in the pursuit of the shared purpose. In this sense, Purposeship requires a

commitment to *Intercollective* Impact, in which all agents work toward beneficial impacts

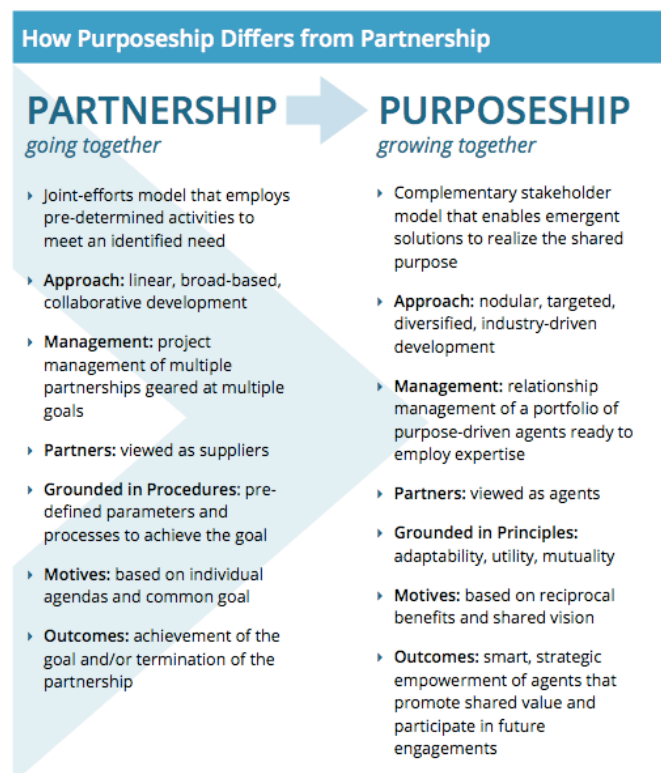


Figure 1. How Purposeship Differs from Partnership

for the community as well as for the other agents involved (the Principles of Utility and Mutuality).

Perhaps one of the most straightforward ways to describe the difference between partnership and Purposeship is the concept of “going together” versus “growing together” (see Figure 1). Partnerships focus on the task of “going together” by bringing a group of organizations together at the starting line and moving in unison toward a development goal. Purposeships view agents at different starting lines of their own, dependent on their own development. Additionally, Purposeships do not necessarily require the full participation of all agents in all activities throughout the entire process; it is understood that targeted resources will be employed when the emergent solutions call for them as agents walk alongside one another.

4.3 The Implications of Purposeship for CSOs

Given that CSOs are in the business of development, the Purposeship approach would have major implications for their management structure. In the case of traditional partnerships, CSOs tend to act as project managers, monitoring the pre-determined procedures of partners in the achievement of the development goal. On the other hand, the Purpose-Driven CSO views agents through the lens of a relationship manager and tends to an ever-changing portfolio of the resources, capacities, and needs of each agent. This enables CSOs to match emergent solutions with targeted resources, while also staying abreast of the individual developmental opportunities for each agent. Given this portfolio approach, Purpose-Driven CSOs operate by tracking resources and needs in a more flexible and nodular way, rather than through standardized and linear means.

To illustrate, Figure 2 represents the traditional project management model that CSOs typically employ. In this model, CSOs assign single or multi-stakeholder partners to individual projects that connect with their mission. Partners essentially become suppliers and the CSO is generally not strategically aware of its partners’ individual development goals. As a result, partners are less committed to the delivery of the resource and CSOs may rely on contractual arrangements or memorandums of understanding to ensure their dedication. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the CSO identifies a variety of projects, manages a series of corresponding partners that deliver the required resources, and anticipates that the projects uniformly and comprehensively contribute to the organization’s mission. The focus of this kind of CSO often becomes partnership management rather than mission delivery.

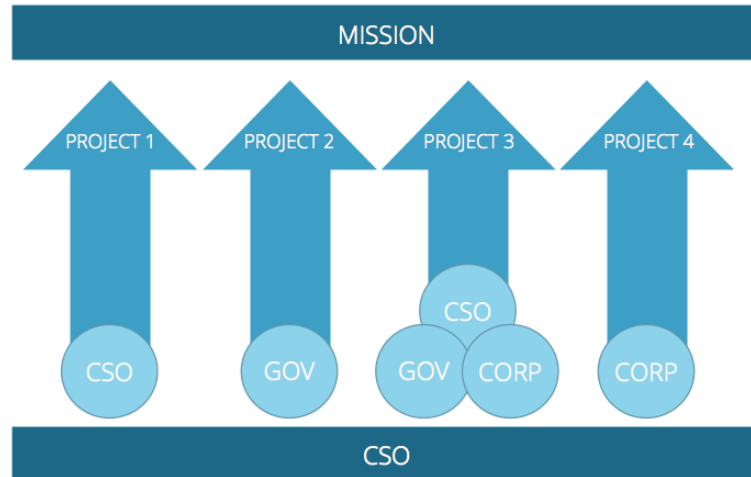


Figure 2. The Traditional CSO Management Model

The Purpose-Driven CSO looks beyond the partner’s role as a predictable supplier and instead focuses on their dynamic contributions to emergent solutions. Beyond having an understanding of the strategic resources partners can provide to achieve the mission, this kind of CSO is also keenly aware of the development opportunities and interests of each partner. By going one level deeper and recognizing the various developmental needs of partners, Purpose-Driven CSOs effectively transform the partner relationship from one of *supply* to one of *agency*, in which partners (now agents) are invited to share their own development goals as well as identify their potential contributions to the shared purpose. By empowering agents to share needs and identify solutions, CSOs are able to pool new knowledge and resources while simultaneously “giving back” to agents by incorporating their development goals into the Purposeship. As such, the Purpose-Driven CSO recognizes that agents (such as communities, other CSOs, corporations, and government entities) each possess a spectrum of ever-changing needs and resources.

Figure 3 demonstrates the management model of the Purpose-Driven CSO, in which nodes (representing agents) are mobile and more reflective of the needs and resources at any given time. Driven by its mission and supported by the Principles of Purposeship, the Purpose-Driven CSO does not view nodes as fixed in place, but sees them as constantly moving in order to best identify and respond to emergent solutions and opportunities.

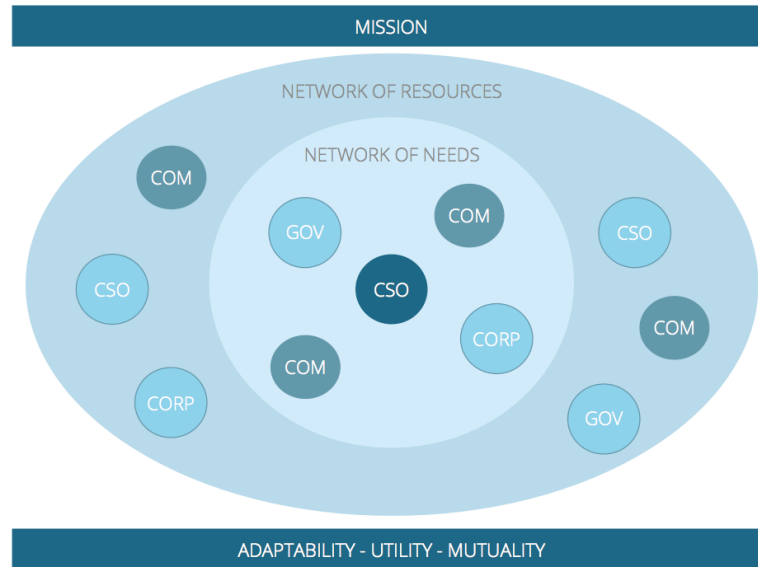


Figure 3. The Purpose-Driven CSO Management Model

Adopting a Purpose-Driven approach disarms a formerly challenging power struggle and places it in favor of the CSO: when an CSO is aware of the development opportunities for agents, the CSO is able to transparently guide them through the process. If applied to Corporate-CSO relationships, Purpose-Driven CSOs will have the power to transparently and actively contribute to business development and practice. An additional benefit of this approach is that agents feel personally invested in the Purposeship, which ensures that CSOs have access to targeted resources for the long-term in order to deliver their mission. The focus of this kind of CSO is strategic mission delivery through Intercollective Impact, which inherently fosters quality relationship management.

By incorporating development opportunities for agents, the Purpose-Driven CSO encourages all agents to be drivers of the Purposeship and share ownership of the engagement process. These CSOs fundamentally embrace Adaptability and are charged with the responsibility to deliver Intercollective Impact, ensuring that the feedback loops of Utility and Mutuality are in balance to provide equitable beneficial outcomes for both the purpose and the agents themselves. This is the power of Purposeship.

5. The Principles of Purposeship

The Foundational Principle of Adaptability provides the space for emergent solutions, whereas the Functional Principles of Utility and Mutuality ensure equitable beneficial outcomes for the purpose and the agents. The concept of Intercollective Impact governs the relationship between the functional principles, providing the checks-and-balances to ensure that there is equitable benefit for all agents involved.

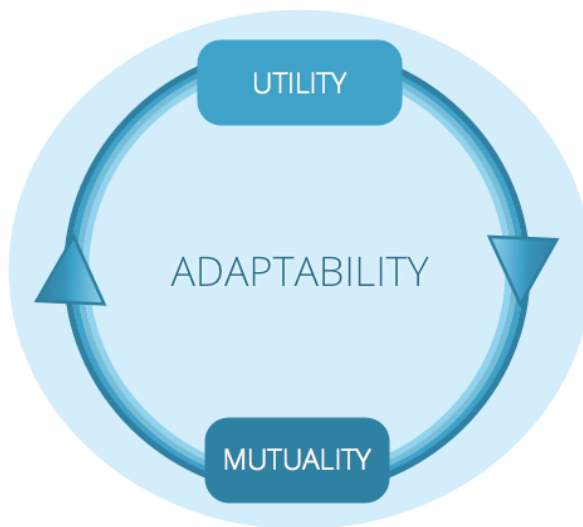


Figure 4. The Principles of Purposeship

As Figure 4 demonstrates, Adaptability is what defines the Purposeship space. As such, all activities that occur within the Purposeship are based in this foundational principle. The Principles of Utility and Mutuality are brought to the foreground, representing the functional role of Purposeship in keeping the balance of Intercollective Impact.

When put into practice, the Purposeship tracks the feedback loops of these two principles, monitoring the “push-and-pull” between

the two to ensure the balance of equitable outcomes for the purpose and the agents themselves.

Finally, it is understood that the Principles of Purposeship are constitutive in that all agents that enter into the Purposeship space are required to adopt and demonstrate a commitment to the principles in their own right. Once operating in the Purposeship space, these principles also serve a facilitative role, meaning that they serve as the basis for interaction between agents throughout the Purposeship and guide all activities within.

5.1 The Adaptability Principle

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.” – Charles Darwin

Principle

Agents shall consciously adapt to achieve the shared purpose.

Definition

Adaptability is the capacity to strategically adjust thinking and actions in response to changing circumstances based on relevant knowledge and improved understanding.¹⁰ As a natural process that is characteristic of any evolving organism, Adaptability is a key capacity for an organization to develop, to survive, and to accomplish its goals. In the case of a Purposeship, Adaptability is the foundational characteristic required of all agents, demonstrating that each is fundamentally committed to a constant and intentional analysis of themselves and their environment. This enables agents to identify and respond to emergent solutions and remain aligned with the shared purpose.

Application

An organization that is fundamentally committed to Adaptability not only engages in adaptive behavior, but does so at a conscious and proactive level. The adaptable organization views this as a strategy in itself and finds success in regularly measuring and responding to stakeholder demands and needs. Adaptable organizations embrace ambiguity as part of a continuous learning process and focus on improving their capacity to adapt accordingly.

5.2 The Utility Principle

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” – Aristotle

Principle

Agents shall contribute to the fulfillment of the shared purpose.

Definition

Utility describes the capacity to generate benefits that satisfy needs. The level of Utility is determined by the effectiveness of the strategies and resources used to meet those needs. In the Purposeship context, the relationship of the needs with the unique capacities of each agent determines the timing, scope, and relevance of each agent’s contribution in the

achievement of the shared purpose. Given their shared commitment to Utility, agents are compelled to contribute their resources in the most practical, beneficial, and efficient way.

Application

The Utility Principle describes the relevance of each agent's unique contribution to the fulfillment of the shared purpose. Because Utility is concerned with the quality and timely fulfillment of the shared purpose, Utility is used to measure and confirm the indispensability and impact of each agent's individual contribution.

5.3 The Mutuality Principle

“All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Principle

Agents shall intentionally enhance beneficial outcomes for the other agents in pursuit of the shared purpose.

Definition

Mutuality is the quality or state of interactions in which each agent benefits. As a natural evolution of cooperation, mutual interactions favor interdependent and enduring relationships. In the Purposeship context, Mutuality enables the interdependent beneficial outcomes generated through the Purposeship which are valuable to agents. As such, benefits are intentionally reinforced by agents in order to stimulate the meaningful engagement of others and promote mutual development for themselves.

Application

The Mutuality Principle describes the symbiotic nature of the Purposeship that empowers agents to concurrently develop while pursuing the shared purpose. It facilitates the concept of “growing together”, which not only encourages agents to meaningfully contribute, but also lays the foundation for the positive transformation of each agent.

6. Conclusion

Purposeship and its Principles of Adaptability, Utility, and Mutuality are inspired by natural law and by the dynamic ways in which organisms interact. By using a principles-based rather than procedural approach, Purposeship is sensitive to the dynamism of development and enables agents to respond to emergent needs and solutions in real-time.

Purposeships empower a network of relationships that are smart, strategic, and sensitive to emergent solutions. Lines of communication are open in both directions and agents are empowered to share new ideas for working toward the shared purpose. Agents are invited to voice their ideas for their own development and are empowered to guide the integration of them into the Purposeship. In the end, Purposeship promotes productive, sustainable, and transformative development with benefits for all involved.

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