



SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES IN STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

*Transform Status Quo Mediocrity
into Greatness*

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“Your daily life is your temple and your religion.
Whenever you enter into it take with you your all.”
- *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran

About SPIBR.org LLC

Founded in 2007 in Loveland, Colorado, SPIBR.org LLC is an international consultancy focused on strategic alliance managers. We are about the practical application of spiritual principles in business relationships. We help strategic alliance managers increase personal and organizational effectiveness and create a more value-enabling climate. Professional services include training, consulting and coaching services for alliance managers, alliance management effectiveness, and transformational practices.

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Acknowledgements

As you perceive the holy companions who travel with you, you will realize that there is no journey, but only an awakening.

- A Course in Miracles

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When the student is ready the teacher will appear.

When the teacher is ready the student will appear.

And when the student is really ready he will realize

The Teacher is with him always and everywhere.

- The Teacher

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This book is dedicated to those who regularly
do the impossible with nothing in the eye of a hurricane.
You know who you are.



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1 Introduction

The overlap of *spirituality* with *strategic alliance work* becomes clear and obvious when we look past the drama and complexity of both to the simple essence in each.¹ At their core both spirituality and alliancing are about *relationship* – the deepening of relationship.

Most alliances fail. They fail because businesses fail at *relationship*. The need to use spiritual principles in alliance management is clearly a strategic imperative. Our challenge is *how* to bring these principles into business in a practical and non-divisive manner. This book is about the practical application of spiritual principles to help make alliance managers more effective and their alliances more successful in value-creation.² In short, this book is about increasing the effectiveness of an alliance, based on a fundamental change in perspective – a change in how we choose to see ourselves, others and situations.

This book describes spiritual principles in a manner palatable to business and practical in alliancing work.³ We suggest helpful practices that will transform us as alliance managers and transform our alliances. This work calls for boldness and courage; but we already embody such attributes if we are experienced alliance managers. Now we take our bold courageousness to a deeper level for value-enabling benefit. Now we look deeply within ourselves.

Some have described this book as an internal technical manual for strategic alliance managers.

Spiritual Disclaimer

I describe my spirituality as being open and growing; and yet, I acknowledge that I have unseen biases or blind spots that can cause me to be closed-minded. I describe the two “spiritual universities” in my life as my recovery from drug addiction and dealing with my children’s progressive disability.⁴ I am also a long-standing student of *A Course in Miracles* and an active participant in 12-step recovery (Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous).⁵ In my writings and in my life, I am very clear about the spiritual principles, or “simple truths,” which are important to me.⁶ Sometimes my bold clarity coupled with a passion for life can be perceived as zealotry or dogmatism, which I am strongly opposed to. Do *not* blindly accept my simple truths as yours. You have the truth within you; so, *be true to yourself*.

Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking.

- Steve Jobs

Please do not blindly accept what I say to be true. Try it out and validate it with your own life experience. Most of the ideas in this book can stand on their own without the need to understand or embrace spiritual principles. As I see it, spirituality sheds light on *why* or *how* this stuff works, and it helps us understand the *fundamental principles* in strategic alliances.

Target Audience: experienced strategic alliance managers

This book is written *by* and *for* experienced strategic alliance managers, as well as for others involved in the day-to-day operation of an alliance. The reader of this book should have substantial experience in strategic alliances and is looking to make fundamental breakthroughs.⁷ They are seeking to understand the fundamentals in alliancing by asking, “How do alliances really work? What can I do to help make my alliance better, to help make it great? How can I be of greater service?”

There is so much at stake in any alliance. Yet, there is often so much chaos, drama, complexity and confusion. Simple clarity and boldness are needed to cut through this obscuring haze. We don’t have the time to “mince words.” So this book is as bold, clear and direct as possible.

My hope is that this book will be for you a spirituality-in-alliancing primer, something I wish I had 20 years ago.



The Purpose of This Book

This book encourages and emboldens alliance managers to confront our most vexing, strategically important and rewarding issues.⁸ It motivates us to *go within* and work on our *most* important strategic alliance of all – our *relationship with our Self*.⁹

This book paints a clear, rational and compelling picture for the *practical* application of spiritual principles, which *do* improve strategic alliances. This book deals directly with changes in attitude & mindset in order to deepen and improve relationship. Relationship work is sorely needed in strategic alliances. And deepening relationship is what spirituality is all about.

What the world of business needs is a fundamental transformation, first by transforming self, then our alliance, then other business relationships, and, in time, the world of business.¹⁰ All transformation starts *within* and then moves *without*. The value-enabling results are greater trust, more open communication, a healthier atmosphere, more creative brainstorming of ideas, and greater collaboration, leading to increased value-creation. We see these results first around ourselves, then in our alliance and, in time, throughout business and the world. We are about changing the world by *being* that change. We are about being the metaphor for metamorphosis.

This difficult and important work is done *in the midst* – in the between. This is work done *between* companies, *between* individuals, *between* mind and heart, and even *between* ideas. Opportunities live *in the midst*. Opportunities are hidden behind the obstacles that are also *in the midst*. The answers to the obstacles which are hiding valuable opportunities are found *in the midst*. And, it's no wonder that all of this is true because spirit lives in the between, *in the midst*, arguably spirit *is* the midst.

The Audience's Points-of-View

Here may be your points-of-view:

- Strategic alliances are *increasingly important* to businesses; yet, they *continue failing* at an unacceptably high rate (over half fail to achieve their expected value).
- Strategic alliances are difficult and complex. Businesses often do not understand the unique *type* of work nor the *amount* of work required for success.
- Implementing alliancing-related processes, tools and systems in the organization is helpful but insufficient to significantly improve today's abysmal success rates.
- Knowledge acquisition and skills development is also helpful but insufficient; something else is needed. Skills and knowledge alone do not seem to address the fundamental issues.
- Perhaps what's needed is a change in attitude & mindset. But how is this change achieved? And is this type of change even possible?
- Spirituality is too abstract, too religious and too mystical. It has no practical value in the real world of business.
- Bringing up the topic of spirituality in our meetings will bring with it pro- or anti-religious zealotry, and this will be more divisive than helpful.
- Business is no place for spiritual stuff. I am skeptical that spirituality will help. I think it will hurt more than it will help and I already have enough problems.
- I would love to bring spirituality into my work; the connection seems obvious. But *how* can I do that?



Have the above points captured your thoughts around the possible application of spirituality principles in strategic alliances? This emotionally charged objective needs to be dealt with in a rational and objective manner. Such is one of the main purposes of this book.

Experiencing Transformation

This book focuses on transformation – yours and your alliance’s. What has been my transformation? Below is an overview of alliance-related growth I have experienced over the past 25-30 years. My hope is that my *transformational* experiences might help illustrate *our* potential for grandeur; this phrase may sound grandiose.¹¹ Transformation is “*both* all about me *and* nothing about me” – it is all about “*we*.” It is about transforming status quo mediocrity into greatness.

It is my hope that through my experiences you might more clearly see your transformational potential. For 16 years I established, developed and managed strategic alliances for Hewlett-Packard (HP) with nearly every high-technology company and in nearly every form of intercompany business relationship.¹² Here are some highlights:

- From 1989 to 1991, I helped establish and lead a three-year, multi-million dollar strategic alliance with US West Advanced Technology (now Qwest Communications, a 14 billion dollar telecommunications company covering most of the western U.S.). This alliance focused on collaboratively developing advanced object-oriented software development technology. Each year engineers from one company relocated and worked in the lab of the other company. This was my first strategic alliance.
- In March 1997, I was part of the core team that established HP’s corporate-level strategic alliance with Microsoft. Our directive was to simplify computing for enterprise customers (large corporations). I helped prepare HP’s senior executives with briefings on intercompany issues: organizational, strategic and cultural differences.¹³ I led the intercompany negotiations on UNIX/NT-interoperability – the most strategically contentious area of that corporate-level alliance. Then for three years, I coordinated over 125 technology initiatives between the two companies, often directly leading negotiations on behalf of HP’s business units, such as internet security and cryptography, objective-oriented software and UNIX/NT interoperability. Today this alliance impacts nearly every part of HP’s business and is measured in many billions of dollars per year.
- From 2002 to 2005, I established the first strategic alliance between HP’s printing business (IPG) and SAP.¹⁴ The catalyst deal for this alliance was valued at over 300 million dollars during HP’s business planning horizon. This relationship was focused on co-developing enterprise document workflow technology for integration into SAP’s application integration middleware, SAP NetWeaver. Many had considered this deal to be impossible. It was during this time when I was explicitly searching for spiritual principles in alliances. It took 18 months of intense discussion and nine months of formal contract negotiation to close the deal. Today SAP leverages in excess of one billion dollars in HP/IPG product and services each year.

Over this 16-year period I experienced, personified and observed the complexities, challenges and failures discussed throughout this book. I also achieved significant success and growth. Success outweighed failure, and so HP allowed me to continue working as a strategic alliance manager.¹⁵ I can look back now and see how my alliancing career evolved through four types of change agents: fact-based, authority-based, relationship-based and transformational.¹⁶

In my earliest alliancing work I over-analyzed and over-drove. I prepared for negotiations with excruciating detail. We often lost sight of the big picture as we examined various terms into the minutia. Being a driver-driver personality type, “*my*” alliance was not a fun place to work – for me or anyone else. “No deal” was not an option. I heard second-hand that others in the organization feared that I might die from a heart attack, based on my obsessive intensity. At the conclusion of some especially intense negotiations with IBM, an HP coworker suggested that my business card should have the title “Asshole Negotiator.”¹⁷ At the time I interpreted his comment as a compliment; an admission that I was more competitively successful than he. Now I see this period of my life as dominated by a “*me vs. you*,” fear-based world view. I was an excessively-competitive, overly-analytical egomaniac.¹⁸



Sixteen years later, after we had established HP/IPG's first strategic alliance with SAP, others in the alliance (in both companies) had a much different experience working in *our* alliance. I again heard second-hand comments. This time I was described as a "peacemaker" and the "savior of the business." Our negotiations were based on two *simple* slides which captured the essence in the alliance – incremental value and value-impediments.¹⁹ Rather than *making* this alliance happen, we *let* it happen. There were times when it appeared the deal might not happen, and I was willing to accept that outcome. "No deal" was okay.

My 16-year personal transformation was driven by work experiences, but most poignantly by life experiences. Over this same period of time, roughly 1989 through 2005, I *had* to grow. Life seemed to say "grow or die." Two diseases propelled me, often kicking and screaming, through the *acceptance* and then the *embracement* phases of spiritual growth. Sometimes life drags me kicking and screaming to precisely where I truly want to be.

My disease was the disease of drug addiction. Until I could learn to completely accept my addiction, I was stuck in the disease. With *acceptance* came *transcendence*, "freedom from active addiction." Over considerable time I continued growing, next through *embracement*. With loving *embracement* (acceptance combined with love) comes *transformation*. I now gratefully realize that my disease of addiction is *the greatest spiritual blessing in my life*. It has forced me to wake up and stay awake. I had to "figure out this stuff or die" – in a literal, spiritual and practical sense. For me, spirituality is not a theoretical academic debate. It is a life and death matter, here and now. I learned in Narcotics Anonymous that if something is not practical it is not spiritual.

During this same period of time, our family had to learn to *accept* and then *embrace* a physical disease that afflicts two of our four children, Friedreich's Ataxia (FA). FA slowly destroys bodies and shortens their lives.²⁰ This disease affects my oldest son and my youngest daughter. Like addiction, FA also affects our entire family and the community of friends and family around us. This disease has forced me to stay in the moment, see the oneness of us all, and it has taught me that we are not our bodies. With acceptance and embracement I am continually taught amazing lessons from both diseases.

Some might say that having these two diseases in one life is "just not fair." But life is not fair. I actually have two spiritual "universities" which, if I remain open, continually teach me valuable lessons. I have learned from my disease and my children's disease simple and practical spiritual truths. These simple truths come into my work life and provide me with an unfair *competitive* advantage. But does competition really have any place in a spiritual practice? Is there such a thing as "competitive spirituality"? Well, I believe the competitive aspect of spirituality is experienced as *inspiration*.²¹

Inspiration provides a transformational competitive advantage. It is my hope that this book will inspire you to be grand and transform you and your world.

Focus on Our Most Important *and* Our Most Difficult Challenges

There is something exciting and inspiring when we focus on achieving important and challenging accomplishments. Let's explore the intersection of our most important and challenging aspects of our work as strategic alliance managers.

Strategic alliances are *critically important* in business and they are *extraordinarily difficult*. We are trying to get *competitive* companies to *collaborate*. The very nature of our work requires us to face important and challenging issues. Our companies and our success depend upon us proactively facing and dealing with difficult issues, head on. Maybe it is *challenge* itself that attracts us to this type of work.

Focus on fundamentals – trying to understand root-cause or fundamental issues is of paramount importance in solving difficult problems. My schooling in electrical engineering actually made me enthusiastic for fundamental principles. I actually loved calculus and physics; their fundamental principles amazed me. Decades passed before I could clearly appreciate the attractive nature of fundamental principles:

- They **coalesce** and **clarify** prior experiences, providing insight and **inspiration**.



- They **expand** our problem-solving and **creative abilities**. They **enthuse** us.
- They bring a **predictive** ability. With a sense of **timelessness** they allow us to see the **interconnectedness** of events and to see how the future might unfold.

Focus on relationships – relationship is *the* fundamental issue in alliancing. Relationships are a root-cause source of alliance success or failures. Deepening relationship *is* the answer. Central in relationships is spirituality – the deepening of our relationship with others, the Infinite and Self.²²

Talking about spirituality in business is difficult. But remember, as alliance managers we do not shirk from difficult issues; so, we should not avoid spirituality, *if* it will be *helpful*. This book will show that spirituality *does* help:

- **Transform** ourselves and our alliance.
- Allow for more **open** and **trust-filled communications**.
- **Deepen** and, therefore, **improve relationships** – interpersonal and intercompany.
- **Change the overall climate** in our alliance.²³

Focus on attitude & mindset – in order to use spirituality to deepen relationships, we need to deal with our own and others' attitudes & mindsets. This is our most difficult and most valuable work.

Focus on the dauntingly impossible – each one of these topics – alliancing, relationships, spirituality, attitude & mindset – are individually very difficult. In combination, they are daunting, arguably impossible. Alliancing is about “doing the impossible with nothing.” Improving relationships is really hard work. Talking about spirituality in business is nearly taboo. Going within self to do spiritual work brings up deep-seated and life-long fears. And many people believe that changing attitude & mindset is impossible.

Alone we face impossible odds. Together we *do* the impossible, as a “we thing.” *That is* an alliance.

The impossible often has a kind of integrity which the merely improbable lacks.

- Douglas Adams