



STRATEGIC alliance

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COVER STORY

THE FUTURE of ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT:

*Collaboration is the
organizational capability
leaders consider most
essential for success in the
21st century*

The Future of Alliance Management

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ONE PROFESSION, MANY FACES:
Demystifying Alliance Management

FLIPPING THE QUESTION:
*Demonstrating Value that
Matters to Senior Executives*

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ASAP 2014 Global Summit Recap

PLUS

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YOUR CAREER:
*HR Matchmaking: A Data-Driven Approach
to Hiring Alliance Professionals*





Alliance manager roles can be tough to fill—difficult for the companies hiring alliance executives, and challenging for the executives who must bring a unique mix of capabilities and experience to the job. Enter Sheri Smith, CEO and founder of Watershed, a corporate consultant and human potential guru who seeks to turn the art of matching people and jobs into a data-driven science.

Smith founded Watershed with the vision of ushering in an education revolution that shifts from standardization to a system that empowers and trains each individual to find work he or she is intrinsically suited for. To do so, Smith relies on a Career-Value Life Cycle, a type of guidance pipeline from high schools to universities, to eventually finding the right profession.

While working with a CSAP-certified professional at IBM, Smith was presented with the challenges many corporate alliance management departments face: how to find the right candidates for such a complex role, and how to cultivate high-potential executives who might one day become alliance managers. Smith's answer: Know what you are looking for and whether the candidate fits those demands. Senior-level strategic alliance managers need to be highly skilled in a broad and contradictory spectrum of competencies, as well as intrinsically motivated. They must possess behavioral qualities that suit the environment of the job.

In order to determine the right mix of competencies, behaviors and motivators for the role, six CSAP-certified professionals provided key attributes for a benchmark that outlines characteristics

of a successful senior alliance manager. "The patented benchmark process is based on four sciences refined over 30 years by assessment firm Target Training International," Smith explained.

Number one on the hierarchy of competencies is the ability to be persuasive. This is a skill that extends beyond the obvious art of diplomacy needed for the job. "If an alliance manager can't persuade

people, they're going to fail," Smith said. "The alliance manager has to convince internal stakeholders and external stakeholders to find mutual value."

However, being persuasive is not about winning at all costs. Collaboration and teamwork are part of the process. "You cannot alienate people in the persuasive process and in negotiation. That's where we have to create mutual value that works for both of us and do it in a way that benefits the company," she said.

When the task at hand is to get alignment among stakeholders and across organizations, the fifth order in the hierarchy of competencies takes center stage:

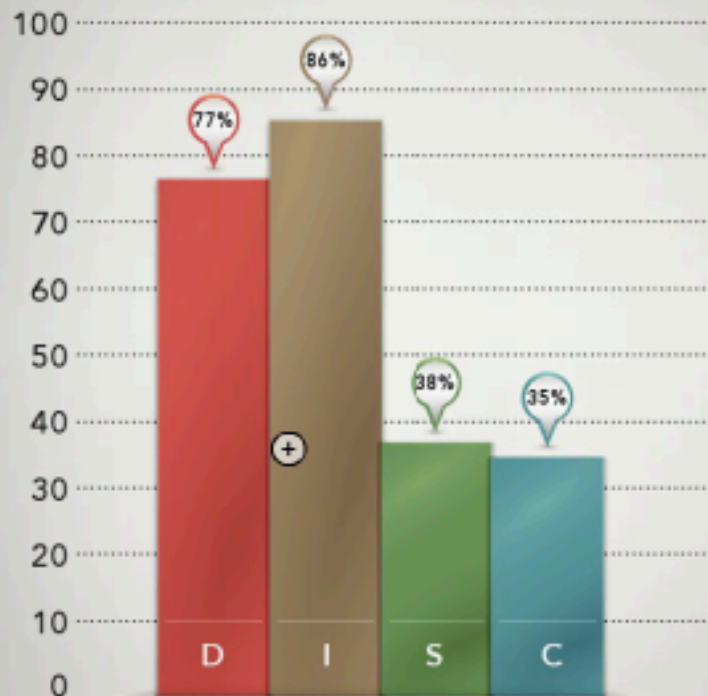
leadership. "That's where you have to take a stand, have to believe in the project, this alliance you are spearheading and leading, and that's very, very hard," Smith asserted. "Leadership requires a resiliency that allows you to take risks."

Overall, an alliance manager needs to maintain a delicate balance. While demonstrating leadership and ensuring mutual value for stakeholders, the manager must keep the partnership on course and focused on the joint relationship, especially as challenges arise. "Conflict management is about sorting out the parties, smoothing over ruffled feathers,

TOP 10 COMPETENCIES FOR SENIOR ALLIANCE MANAGERS

01. Persuasion
02. Interpersonal Skills
03. Teamwork
04. Negotiation
05. Leadership
06. Resiliency
07. Conflict Management
08. Flexibility
09. Personal Accountability
10. Self-Management

SENIOR ALLIANCE MANAGER IDEAL BEHAVIOR GRAPH



which are inevitable in managing alliances,” Smith explained.

Behavior styles are another important set of factors to consider for hiring the right alliance manager. Using the Dominance-Influencing-Steadiness-Compliance [DISC] model, the benchmark indicates that a style favoring high I and D with a lower S and C would make a candidate more likely to succeed in an alliance position; someone who is ambitious, strong-willed and decisive, yet people-oriented, flexible and risk-tolerant.

Understanding what motivates people is one of the strongest indicators of potential success in a job. It is critical for an alliance professional to value results and rewards for time and effort spent (high Utilitarian), as well as a strong sense of control over their environment (high Individualistic). The benchmark uncovered that while high Individu-

alistic motivators are necessary for senior alliance managers, large companies’ culture typically favor people with Traditional values instead of Individualistic. This disconnect explains why so many alliance managers feel like they are pushing a boulder uphill while trying to align internal stakeholders with a new idea or process.

The data aggregated in Watershed’s benchmarking process indicate why alliance management roles can be particularly challenging to fill: they are complex, demanding jobs. It’s not easy to find executives who are strong in all or most of the key attributes that make for success in the role.

“The scores on these—the actual benchmarks for alliance managers in particular—are way above average. Companies are looking for people who are highly skilled in most areas,” Smith said. ■