



## The Junkyard Dog Factor and the Honeymoon Effect: Is This You?

By Susan Saldibar

Partnerships. They can be a true collaboration and win-win with shared goals, or they can become a nightmare of “he said, she said”. One thing’s for sure, if you go into one the wrong way, it’s hard to get it right again.

Service providers, such as the globally respected Sodexo (a Senior Housing Forum partner), know all about what makes a partnership work, and what doesn’t.

Part of their collective wisdom comes from their own partnership with Kate Vitasek, an award-winning researcher, author and the originator of the Vested® business model, a highly collaborative style of working that results in a true “win-win” relationship between organizations.

Carolyn Reynolds, Director of Marketing for Sodexo, shared with me the Vested “10 Ailments” of partnerships and how a Strategic Partner can help “cure” those ailments.

Here they are. Any look familiar?

### 1. Pennywise and Pound Foolish

You procure your goods or services based almost exclusively on costs. You may call it a partnership, but the main purpose is to get as good a deal as possible.

*With a Strategic Partnership: You will be able to add value, as your strategic partner helps provide solutions, not just cost relief. Strategic partners will focus on long term benefits, not just cost.*

### 2. The Outsourcing Paradox

You have strictly defined the “perfect” set of tasks, frequencies and measures for your partner. But, in doing so, you have put your partner on a short leash with no maneuver room to innovate or change tactics to gain a better result. When you don’t see the results, you blame the partner.

*With a Strategic Partnership: You and your partner can establish goals that benefit both you and your prospective partner before you sign a contract.*

### 3. The Activity Trap

Your partner sets up the contract so that you pay for each transaction, regardless of whether it is needed or not. That results in a string of potentially needless tasks and transactions in which you are both operating at odds with one another.

*With a Strategic Partnership: You will no longer need to take unnecessary actions, spinning your wheels with less than stellar results. A strategic partner will focus on outcomes, not transactions!*

### 4. The Junkyard Dog Factor

Your employees fear for their own positions when they get wind that you are planning to outsource some services. Key staff dig in and stake out their “territories” in efforts to keep their jobs secure. Reactively, you keep their functions “off the table” for outsourcing.

*With a Strategic Partnership: You will be able to determine those functions that can greatly benefit from the outsourcer's expertise and talent. A strategic partner will recognize and support all expertise and talent, building a "win-win" relationship with you and employees.*

**5. The Honeymoon Effect**

Your initial attitudes towards your partner's promised achievements are positive, but your satisfaction level often drops as the project progresses. That's due to your partner working only to meet basic service levels outlined in the contract. Nothing is incenting them to raise service levels (or decrease the price!)

*With a Strategic Partnership: Productivity will be tied to ongoing goals. A strategic partner will be open to building a shared investment in your community.*

**6. Sandbagging**

Your partner lowers early performance expectations to keep you from wanting "more and more" the next quarter and next year.

*With a Strategic Partner: The "us versus you" mentality will dissolve. A strategic partner will quickly become aligned, culturally, with your organization and will strategically collaborate towards a mutually beneficial outcome.*

**7. The Zero-Sum Game**

Your skepticism about partnerships leads you to employ the philosophy— for me to win, you must lose! The relationship is adversarial from the start. You will ultimately fall into both the Activity Trap and the Outsource Paradox.

*With a Strategic Partner: You will have a partner who is willing to share risk with your community; one who is committed to building trust.*

**8. Driving Blind Disease**

You have all the metrics in the world at your fingertips. But they are not aligned properly to your business objectives.

*With a Strategic Partner: No more "watermelon scorecards" that are green on the outside but with plenty of red ink on the inside. A strategic partner will collaborate with you on metrics that will advance your community forward. They will help remove those that threaten to move both you and your partner away from key goals.*

**9. Measurement Minutia**

You attempt to get a high degree of granularity by setting up your systems everything down to the most minute level. You may not be seeing the larger picture and, therefore, move in the wrong direction.

*With a Strategic Partner: You will no longer get lost in minutia. A strategic partner will help you identify the most critical performance indicators and monitor progress against specific goals and objectives.*

**10. The Power of Not Doing**

You measure on a variety of key criteria, but you fail to use the results to manage your community to meet your goals.

*With a Strategic Partner: You will gain assurance that the things you are measuring have "real world" value to your residents, your team and your community. A strategic partner can provide outside perspective to help.*

Okay, now that you've seen the list, how many of these ailments could you resolve by partnering with a strategic partner?

Building an outcome versus a transactional partnership will help to guide it towards solutions in which everybody wins. Collaboration, shared goals, value and risks, are expectations you should have of your partners. Anything less and your partner arrangement may be headed for some serious ailments.

There is a lot more to all of this, as you can imagine. But, given the need to balance providing high quality and innovation at a cost residents can afford, you may need a good partner, now more than ever.



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