

DEVOLUTION: IT'S 75% RELATIONSHIPS AND ONLY 25% ABOUT THE DEAL



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The Devolution agenda potentially marks a significant shift of responsibility in the public sector.

The shift of power, responsibility and potential budget will go to newly formed combined organisation, made up of a cluster of existing organisations.

This will call for new ways of working by leadership. Leaders will need to put the majority of their effort into establishing and sustaining the relationships, rather than the deal.

Simply put, if there is weak, or non-existent, relationships between the partners, then there will be no deal.

The SSA “*Relationship VS Deal Balancing Tool*” will help to initiate the approach for building the type of partner relationship that each Devolution organisation is going to need.

The tool guides the individual partners, and then the whole partnership through an iterative process to help the relationships flourish.

Much will be expected of the devolved authorities and their performance will be closely scrutinised. Whilst they will be seeking to make a difference quickly, in reality the relationships will take time to establish and mature. In some cases these relationships are already developing, for others there's a long way to go.

What's on and off the table?

Initially, there is a lot of in-house strategic decision making for organisations to do before they step into collaborative working and express their interest in a devolved deal.

It is important that the board, cabinet, or key decision makers have a clear picture at outset about what they willingly put on the table for collaboration, but more importantly what is off the table.

It is also important that there are healthy discussions within each organisations about their understanding of the partnership and the relationship their organisation wants to have with the Devolution partnership.

In developing devolution proposals the representatives of each partner must step into the devolution meetings, with a clear mandate to talk about the areas of work that their senior leadership believe will be better delivered through a devolved authority.

This includes what they require to be passed to them by government and what they are prepared to transfer from their own authority.

What is the shared destination?

The Devolution partnership then needs to agree a shared vision of where they see the devolved authority in 5 years' time. For example:

- how big is the reward that the partners want?
- are the aspirations of the combined authority limited to the strategic enablement of transport, economic development, housing and/or health, or will it take on a wider remit to support and strengthen the delivery of its component organisations?
- how will the devolved authority work with LEPs, CCGs and other stakeholders?

The reality check

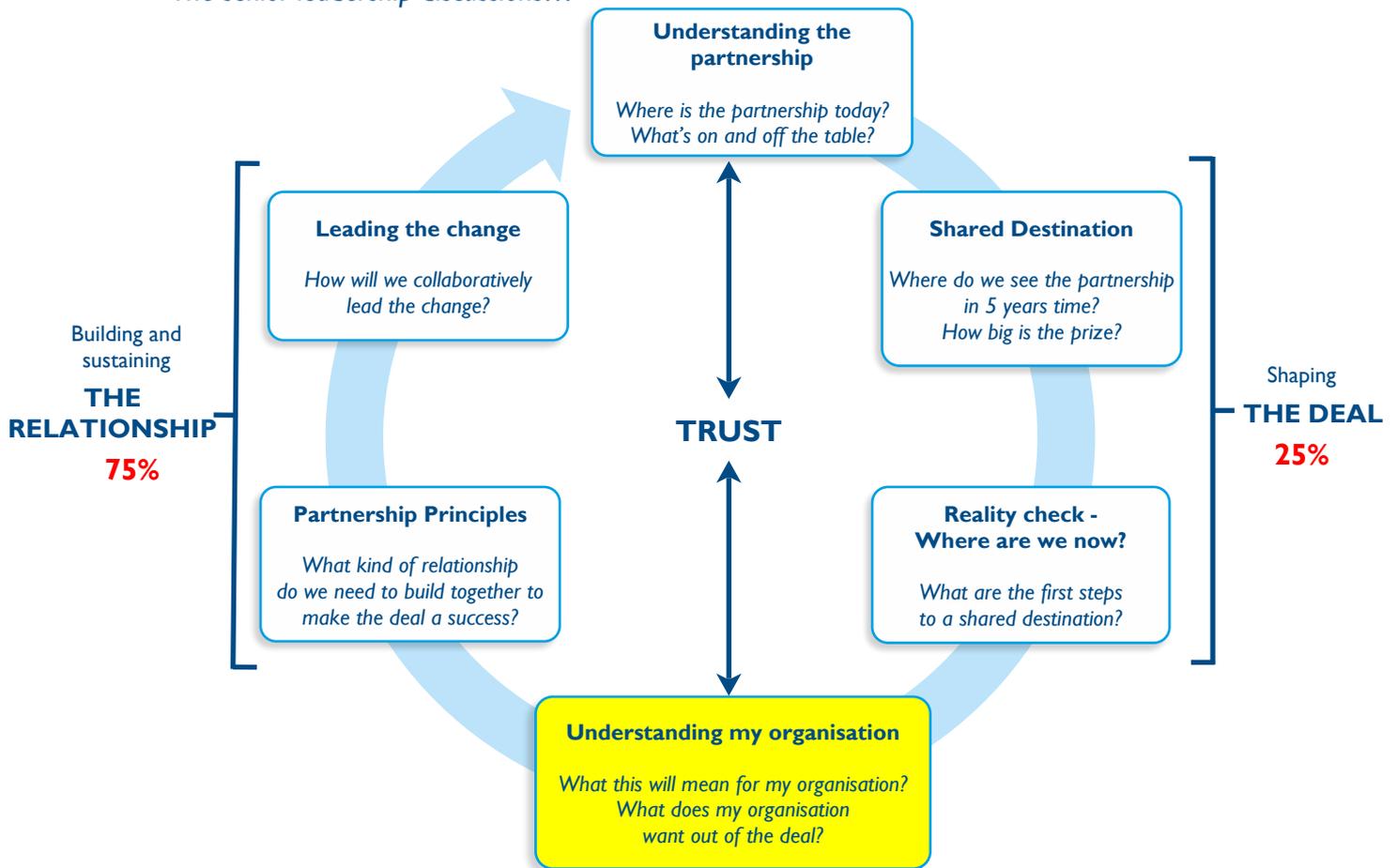
The next step is to check where the partnership and its members are now, in relation to reaching the shared vision.

Each is likely to be at a different point in the journey towards the shared destination and there needs to be outline decisions on the first steps each must take to reach the shared destination.

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The Deal vs Relationship Balance In Collaborative Transformation

The senior leadership discussions...



Once all are clear on the benefits of a devolved authority then the partners need to be clear how they will work together to enable it to flourish and be successful.

What is in this for us?

Are each of the partners clear about how the establishment of a combined authority will impact upon their own organisation and are they prepared for this?

Do the benefits of the powers and finance devolved to the new authority make this worthwhile?

Setting the Partnership Principles

Once all are clear on the benefits of a devolved authority then the partners need to be clear how they will work together to enable it to flourish and be successful.

What are the expectations of the local authorities within the devolved area, what in turn can they expect and what voice will they have (particularly important in two tier areas)?

Who and how will the partners lead the change?

This is the discussion about resources and how to make the new authority work. There will not be much new money to run and administer the combined authority.

So, will it be established as a stand alone organisation funded through partner subscription or will there be a model of hosting and contributions in kind?

This will lead to the discussion on how the governance, scrutiny and accountability should be arranged?

Some déjà vu next...

When the partners have worked their way around the steps in the tool, then it starts again as the understanding of the partnership will have grown and the destination can be refined as a result.

Some Devolution partnerships are awaiting the outcome of their bids submitted before the government deadline. When they hear if they are successful they still have an awful long way to go in establishing the relationship and clarifying the deal.

The SSA Facilitation Team can support Devolution Partnerships to work through the *Relationship vs Deal Balance Tool*.
Email Manny.Gatt@sharedservicearchitects.co.uk if you would like more information.