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## Thriving together: Partnering with other businesses for success



ALEX BEHRENS AND LYNN GREETIS

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Starting your own business can feel like being on an island -- owners often work so hard to make their business succeed that they often miss valuable partnership opportunities that lay beyond their walls.

What if instead of operating alone in a silo, owners connect with fellow small business leaders?

Rather than trying to manage it all by themselves, small business owners should consider seeking out meaningful partnerships with fellow business leaders and becoming engaged members of their local communities. Doing so can lead not only to growing your network, but also can lead to profitable new business opportunities.

Opportunities abound to meaningfully connect with other small business owners and develop mutually beneficial relationships. That's how we successfully grew our family-owned business, Maple Leaf Coffee Roasters, since its founding in 2018.

Strategically partnering with other local businesses and being a committed member of the community can strengthen not only your business -- but others in your area as well!

**Seek out strategic business partners: Often when owners start their business, they don't have much time to devote to connecting with other area businesses. Although it's important to concentrate on your own success, it could cost valuable relationships and potential new business opportunities in the long run.**

It can seem overwhelming to research and seek out other businesses to partner with at first -- we know firsthand how hard owners need to work just to keep a business going. Start small. Take a look within your immediate community to see if there any businesses that may align well with yours. Once you locate a few, send an email, give them a call or even stop by their location to connect directly with them.

If it's difficult to connect with other businesses during your normal business hours, consider instead attending a local Chamber of Commerce or other local business networking event, which are often in the mornings or evenings, where you can connect directly with other owners to create and forge new potential partnerships.

**Develop mutually beneficial, meaningful relationships: After you've identified other businesses to strategically partner with, determine what opportunities there are for both parties to mutually benefit from the relationship.**

For instance, if your business creates a product that could be a natural fit with another product -- like a peanut-butter and jelly sandwich, for instance -- it could be worth it to seek out other businesses that are creating products that could align well with what you're selling.

In our case, we sought out partnerships with a local chocolatier and an area brewery to create coffee-infused chocolate and beer. The result? Increased sales and exposure for all of the businesses involved -- not to mention new taste sensations to delight our customers!

**Engage in the local community: Civic engagement is increasingly important to businesses big and small in order to connect meaningfully with the community at large. In addition to investing in your local community, it can also be a ripe opportunity to build relationships with other local businesses and organizations.**

Look for ways to engage the community that align well with your business. For example, if you own a restaurant, consider signing up to serve food at a local festival to connect with new customers and other businesses, or maybe even partner with other local food vendors to hold an event to raise money for charity.

Small business success doesn't have to be a solo act. Strategically partnering with other local businesses can be a valuable tool as part of your business' growth and can lead to fruitful relationships with peers right in your own community!

- Alex Behrens and Lynn Greetis are the founders and owners of Maple Leaf Coffee Roasters in Roselle.