

What kind of partner are you?

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Who's your partner? Someone will see their spouse. Another will glance warmly at a colleague sitting next to them. Sure, why not? As long as the place isn't empty.

Even in working life, partnership thinking is not a new phenomenon. In the Stone Age, there were two kinds of people. Hunters and farmers. They say this inheritance still shows in us. Whether you lose your energy when hungry or get angry from a drop in blood sugar indicates your species of origin. Those who were left powerless were able to conserve energy, while fiercer partners used the adrenaline rush to hunt new game as a group.

Both were needed. It would not have been in anyone's interest for the whole group to run after the same prey. And it was also good that some people had already heated the water when the lunch finally arrived.

The same logic applies to business partnerships. Simply put, this also means close cooperation between two or more organisations, leading to a win-win outcome. To develop, partnership requires a mutually agreed goal and approach, which still includes common methods to keep improving activities.

What kind of partner is Lapland University of Applied Sciences?

The world of educational institutions is equally a shared combination of mutual learning and teamwork – a value process in which the knowledge, skills and values of the parties are merged into a thicker broth. In other words, as Johanna Axelsson, executive director of Toivola-Luotola, summarises it: “Through the partnership, we have a common will to develop the wellbeing of the region's inhabitants.”

At least six different goals can be perceived in the contractual partnerships of Lapland UAS. Joint **advocacy work** promotes common social initiatives or otherwise supports the region's

vitality. In Lapland, people have always thought that the stronger our advocacy front is, the better we do as a group.

Strategic development, on the other hand, means looking in the same direction. It would be presumptuous to imagine that the strategic choices we make do not require a network in which the parties share their strategic objectives and strive to achieve them with deep confidence.

The most desirable part of the UAS's partnership operations **focuses on cooperation with education**. For many customers, theses, internships and learning assignments are the most important – perhaps even the only – form of development. New partners are interesting. Systematic dialogue with partners also guarantees an agile and cost-effective way for educational institutions to raise genuine working life problems for students to solve, and thereby to refine better talents.

In the case of RDI projects, partnership often means project-specific and longer-term thematic cooperation. Researching new things requires a solid team. No one has all the expertise on their own, and projects instead often require cooperation between several organisations. Dialogue with the whole team improves the planning of RDI projects and the quality of applications.

If the expertise needed by the customer cannot be found in one's own organisation, it is sought from contract partners through **network cooperation**. For example, it has been a pleasure to note that cooperation between universities of applied sciences deepens year by year. Joint offers are already commonplace. It is easier to catch prey when you can rely on the expertise of your fellow travellers.

An underutilised opportunity offered by partnerships is **the sharing of facilities, equipment and expertise, and their joint development**. Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences has developed a model in which expensive investments have been made in cooperation with companies, and the use of the device has been adjusted in an annual clock manner between the UAS and the companies. I would welcome a wider scope for partnerships when considering new investments in development environments.

How can we be good partners?

When it comes to UAS-level partnerships, the interests of the actors must be compatible and complementary. The partnership agreements set out a few clear priorities for cooperation,

explaining the objectives and benefits to all. The common frame of reference must be clear for everyone – partnership agreements that can be found in the intranet can be accessed by all, and the agreements are always at the UAS level, not the property of individuals or expertise fields.

However, it should be noted that personal chemistry continues to play an important role. Open, direct and continuous interaction between actors is key to building and strengthening trust. Contact persons who are primarily responsible for communications are therefore always defined for the partnerships.

The future is made together!

The competition between universities is also increasingly about who is the most reliable partner, and with whom working life cooperation runs smoothly. Everyone is responsible for their own reputation in the eyes of our partners. Even in the Stone Age, the most delicious stews were made for good team players, and the situation remains no different today.