Involving the firearms industry is absolutely essential in finding ways to reduce the number of firearm related injuries and deaths in children. The truth is we want the same thing, we want responsible gun owners to take safe storage seriously. We clearly can do better, and we can do better together!

Jason Short
Texas Gun Club
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Understand the Power Dynamics of Your Partner Organization

Gaining support for the partnership from upper management can have a trickle-down effect to employees throughout the organization. There is a greater chance for early adoption or buy-in within the organization by involving employees during partnership development. Multiple points of contact can foster engagement and keep the partnership or project moving forward successfully.

Be Willing to Learn About Your Potential Partner’s Industry

Your organization may have an interest in a topic or organization with which you are less familiar. When identifying current or potential partners, some organizations may be outside of your comfort zone. Researching the industry can lead to a successful partnership and assist with future planning.

Building Relationships Takes Time

Relationships do not happen overnight. Building trust and creating a space for innovative thinking is key in establishing relationships. Relationship building is not linear, and connections may be made in nontraditional ways. It is important for individuals and organizations to be receptive to those connections when they emerge.

Establish Your Priorities for Partnership

Start with expectations and expect the unexpected. As public health organizations and businesses are experiencing increasing staff shortages and employee burnout, it is important that priorities and expectations are discussed when establishing a partnership. This will ensure that both parties understand the key efforts to accomplish goals and prevent future miscommunication.

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Determining their values, establishing priorities, thinking upstream, and uncovering biases prepared UT Target Safety to broaden their reach and deepen relationships with the business community. Applying these recommendations covered in section one of the Preparing to Partner prequel, UT Target Safety leveraged their budding partnership with Texas Gun Club to engage and conduct additional focus groups with other local firearm retailers with a vested interest in safety, as well as new and established firearm owners in the Greater Houston area. These successful outreach efforts not only yielded formative research findings that will be used to draft firearm safety messages, it also helped establish the trust essential to growing and moving the partnerships to the next level. It is important to note that the road to strengthened partnerships is not one-way. It must be a continuous process where partners cycle between steps as their work evolves and progresses.

“It has been critical to form new partnerships with the private sector, especially in addressing firearm injury prevention. Texas Gun Club has been essential to our success. In order to address firearm safe storage with the firearm owning community, it is important to have a strong partnership with health care and firearm retailers. The qualitative work has allowed us to strengthen our partnership and also start building new partnerships among the retailer industry, which is key to implement an industry wide intervention. These key steps in relationship building and navigating how to support each other have helped us understand the needs of the retail industry so that we can better inform our intervention and ultimately improve the health and safety of the population.”

Dr. Sandy McKay
Pediatrician

GUIDE POSTS

**Partnership Development Insights**

Public health professionals have traditionally had difficulty talking about firearm safety for several reasons, including political sensitivity, organizational barriers, and inadequate information on communicating firearm messaging effectively, while firearm owners have been reluctant to partner with public health due to perceptions of forced limitations or ineffective messaging around firearm safety. Preparation for a non-traditional partnership between public health and gun retailers required research and planning from public health professionals, as well as overcoming possible internal bias with the topic area. When initiating partnerships on sensitive issues, like firearm safety, it will take time to establish your credibility to ensure the partnership can flourish.

**Health Equity Considerations**

As with any good research, race and equity were central components in the planning and facilitation of the Target Safety interviews and focus groups. Program facilitators made a concerted effort to ensure personal and professional bias did not interfere with the process.

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