
New Bottle—Old or New Wine?

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Front

Seasoned executives sniff out repackaged thinking, discern what's really new in the latest business trends, and use that knowledge and experience to innovate and create value.

By Michael Leonetti, CSAP

Our business conversations are saturated with specialized terminology of all types, from myriad sources. Just think of the “E” words—e.g., enablement, enterprise, execution, empowerment, engagement, edge, end-to-end, ecosystem. Alliance managers used to, and still, refer to ecosystems as networks. But of course today's ecosystem introduces new twists on the old model, network is also a technical term, ecosystems have a different meaning for field biologists and environmentalists, and so on. While today's ecosystems are defined by greater complexity and governance, they continue to make use of the partnered networks learnings we studied 15 years ago. Not a bad thing, just worth noting.

I've been thinking a lot about language—what's old, what's new, what's relevant—as the ASAP organization has stepped out of our comfort zone to collaborate with other business organizations. When I became president and CEO nearly four years ago, one of my priorities was for ASAP to “practice what we preach” by seeking more collaborative relationships. Bit by bit, starting with a partnership to build our certification program and educational materials, we've made progress:

■ For many years, our biopharma members have sought to engage the business development and legal communities to close the gap between deal making and alliance success. Our first attempt with the Licensing Executives Society International was short-lived, but recently we've lit that candle again. Current LES President Brian O'Shaughnessy headlines at this year's ASAP BioPharma conference. Together with former ASAP Chairman Christine Carberry, CSAP and COO at Keryx Biopharmaceuticals, they are discussing opportunities ahead that bizdev, legal, and partnership managers can explore together.

■ Reciprocal speaking engagements with SAMA, the Strategic Account Management Association, included the delivery of workshops jointly conducted with LaVon Koerner of RevenueStorm on building collaborative relationships with strategic accounts. Now, strategic account managers are approaching ASAP to learn the process of defining and delivering collaborative business relations.

■ This August, I conducted a joint webinar on (you guessed it) “Ecosystems: Is Yours Working for You?” with my counterpart Jim Stockmal, president at the Association for Strategic Planning (ASP). Jim and I spent a good bit of time defining business ecosystems and making sure the audience (a mix of alliance execs and strategic planners) all would be on the same page with us.

Finally, one of our most important and longstanding partnering initiatives has culminated in the publication of ISO 44001, the International Organization for Standardization's standard for business collaboration. More than a decade in the making, the standard aligns with ASAP best practices and maps to the *ASAP Handbook of Alliance Management: A Practitioners Guide*. Put differently, the specialized language we've developed over many years to precisely describe what we do to manage partnerships now will be broadly propagated as part of the lexicon of a global standard for collaboration.

Participation in ISO standard development exemplifies the challenges of stepping out of our comfort zone. Not every ASAP member has been enthusiastic or even agrees that a collaboration standard is useful; others envision it being a powerful vehicle to expand ASAP's global footprint and widely propagate enterprises' capability to collaborate. The standard still is very much in early adopter stages—so this is an ideal time for input of ASAP members. The ISO standard is a combination of fresh and well-established thinking—and don't we need both? You can find more information on the standard and its connectivity to ASAP in the August 2017 edition of *eSAM Plus*. Is it time for your company to define its leadership in the partnering community by having your company or alliance certified versus just your people?

As ISO and our other collaborations grow, there will be new ideas along the way as well as the reuse of proven partnering processes and models under new names. The key is to engage, figure it out together, innovate—and always choose to add value. ■

