



### Unit Purpose

The units in the third section of *The Partnership Charter Workbook* (“The Future”) are specifically designed to provide risk management. The risks are “partner distress,” dissatisfaction, and conflict. A partnership is at risk of partner distress and conflict if partners fail to meet one another’s key expectations because “Not fulfilling one’s partners’ expectations is tantamount to breaking a trust: It creates cynicism and sours people to the whole idea of partnerships” (*The Partnership Charter*, p. 178). This unit will help you discover your previously unrecognized or unstated expectations of one another, weed out expectations that are unrealistic, and document the results. Going forward, you will have a way to assess whether or not you are meeting one another’s articulated expectations.

### Background

A common complaint of unhappy partners is that another partner has not lived up to their expectations. The origin of the problem often lies in the fact that they never told their partner of their expectations. Most people don’t make a habit of telling others their expectations of them. Even fewer make an effort to unearth their hidden, or unconscious, expectations. Nonetheless, for business partners it is well worth the time and energy it takes.

Typically, most of our expectations of people are unconscious. We have them, and some of our behavior is determined by them, but we don’t consciously think about them. For example, when we go to a doctor’s appointment, without thinking about it, we expect the doctor to give us her undivided attention. Often, we’re only aware of such expectations when they are unmet, and by then we may already feel disappointed or angry. With our partners, we can try to ward off the disappointment of unmet expectations by consciously considering our expectations, talking about them, and coming to mutual agreements about what we should, or should not, expect.

While completing earlier units, you undoubtedly discovered and discussed many of the expectations you have of one another related to roles, styles, values, etc. There are other expectations, though, that probably did not surface while you were working on the earlier units. For example, a partner may have expectations about his freedom to adjust his work schedule to fit religious commitments, hobbies, or political activities. Another partner may be intensely private and expect her partner to limit their communication strictly to business-related matters and have contact only during working hours.

The expectations that surface in this unit may be extremely personal and unrelated to business. For

example, a person may believe that her future partner's hair is too bedraggled, or desk too untidy, to project the right image to clients or employees. Expectations that don't seem personal at first blush often are. For example, a partner expects the firm will invest in top-tier designer furniture for the office to promote a certain image for dealing with clients. Or, a partner may have a strong commitment to workplace diversity that he expects to implement in all aspects of operations. The expectations – designer furniture, workplace diversity – may not appear to be about the other partners, but eventually it will be very much about them and what they are willing to agree to. Don't expect your partners to buy into the idea of \$2,000 designer chairs if they think the office will be furnished with a trip to IKEA. On the surface, the decision may appear to be about office chairs, but just beneath the surface it feels very personal. It's about a person's image and values and what he is trying to say about himself. Exploring expectations is an excellent way to get at some issues that many people miss until they're well into their partnership. Some of these expectations bear directly on people's day-to-day satisfaction and happiness.

One caveat to consider: Your partners may not accept your expectations of them. Likewise, you may not accept their expectations of you. An important part of this unit is discussing the expectations and talking about what you think, and how you feel, about them. Expect your partners to go along with some expectations and not others. If everyone is willing to thoughtfully and candidly discuss and explore his or her expectations, this will be a rich and interesting conversation. The goal is not to get everyone to buy into your expectations; rather, it is to learn more about each other and the business you will share. The goal is also to feel confident that your expectations will be met.

## Unit Instructions

### 1. Review Chapter 11 of The Partnership Charter

As you re-read the chapter, note any issues that you want to include in your Charter.

### 2. Individual Preparation

The preparation for your meeting to discuss expectations is deceptively simple. It involves making three lists in the "Expectations Exercise" form found in this unit.

- a. Expectations you have for yourself
- b. Expectations you *think* your partners have of you
- c. Expectations you have for each one of your partners

To make the exercise worthwhile, however, you have to dig deep to discover the expectations you have but may not be aware of.

To help tease out your expectations, keep in mind that everyone has them. It is impossible not to. Many of them operate below the level of consciousness. The expectations you want to uncover while working on this unit are all of those that may make a difference in terms of how you conduct yourself or expect your partners to conduct themselves. Avoid run-of-the-mill, generic expectations that apply to everyone (e.g., produce quality work, be responsive to clients). Go for expectations that are personal to your specific partners and would matter to you if they went unmet. Remember, it will be personal. You may as well practice talking about it now.

When you are completing your list of your expectations of your partners, think about ways they could help you do a better job. For example, you might expect them to tell you in a constructive way if you are falling short of your goals or if they think you lost your temper with an employee. Similarly, some expectations of yourself might focus on making it easier for your partners to hold up their side of the bargain. Think both broadly and specifically when creating your lists.

Unearthing your expectations could require you to acknowledge things that aren't pretty or cause you to appear petty. Partner expectations that we've heard that some might consider petty include wanting your partner to wear a suit to work every day, be the first one in and last one out of the office, ensure that someone in the office knows where you are at all times, take no more than 10 vacation days per year, be on time 99% of the time, work at least 8 hours every workday. A word of caution is in order. As you try to uncover expectations of your partners that you were not aware of before, try not to ignore expectations that make you appear petty. It's seemingly petty annoyances that often become major thorns in the sides of partners. It may help to say to one another, "Let's try to surface all the things we can think of now, so we have fewer surprises later." Making that an explicit goal may make it easier to get a wider array of things out on the table.

If you have trouble coming up with good-sized lists of expectations, reflect on your values; they may give you ideas. Think about what was important to you as you worked closely with others in the past. Of course, recall any instances where others failed to meet your expectations. You may be carrying those expectations into this partnership.

## Unit 10 Preparation: Expectations Exercise

### 10. A. Expectations I Have of Myself

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)

### 10. B. Expectations I Think Others Have of Me

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)

**10. C. Expectations I Have of Each of My Partners, (*insert name of partner*)**

Expectations I Have of (*insert name of partner*)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)

Expectations I Have of (*insert name of partner*)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)

The Partnership Charter Workbook

Expectations I Have of *(insert name of partner)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)

Expectations I Have of *(insert name of partner)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
10. ... (you may continue with additional items)