



ensure that equal support is present in the partner firm. Particularly important are mid-level personnel, who may inherit direct responsibility for carrying out the provisions of the contract. Partnerships can be extremely difficult to implement at the middle-management level where parochial interests can derail mutual interests. The Not Invented Here (NIH) syndrome has caused many corporate relationships to fail. If sufficient efforts and incentives are in place up front to bring these middle managers on board, their energy will go into supporting the partnership, as opposed to undermining it.

#### • Champions

Having well-positioned champions in both organizations will also be critical to the partnership. A champion is someone who believes in the idea and strives to get it accepted and implemented by the rest of the organization. Small companies looking to form partnerships with large corporations need champions who can steer the partnership project through the bureaucracy of the corporation and who will be credible when defending its merits. In identifying or cultivating champions, small companies should recognize that champions can quickly disappear in large companies. Fast trackers, who often play a champion role, frequently move right out of the picture and beyond their role as champion as they head up the corporate ladder.

The smaller partner should look for every opportunity to multiply the network of corporate champions in the firm. At the same time, large companies should look to develop effective contacts with small company partners beyond the founder and president.

One way to multiply these inter-relationships is to involve a range of players in the eventual negotiations to ensure that the lineup of champions will be several layers deep. An alliance between two companies will be reinforced by multiple alliances among the people in each company. Multiple relationships provide a continuity even when one of the champions of the partnership is promoted to another position or retires. The more numerous the organizational ties, the more secure and the greater the commitment among the personnel of both firms.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, start early, develop a list of possible partners, rank the list, contact those who fit the profile and are interested, and carry out several types of due diligence examinations before getting too far in the process. Pay particular attention to the potential partner's agenda and the personal aspects of the proposed relationship. Use all your contacts in your network of colleagues, clients, suppliers and associates in your industry to develop leads. Don't rush. If you focus too soon on a single prospect, you might be closing yourself off from other possible partners. Finally, there is no one right partner, so

<sup>5</sup> BOTKIN, James W. and Jana B. MATTHEWS. *Ibid.*, p. 137.