# Spoiler Alerts!!
## Assessing Your Co-Creation Partnership

by Chip R. Bell, adapted from *Inside Your Customer's Imagination: 5 Secrets for Creating Breakthrough Products, Services, and Solutions*

Every partnership has moments of dissonance and discord.  Sometimes, these tense incidents are loud and public; sometimes they internal and unspoken.  Being on the alert for potential hiccups that can spoil the effectiveness of your relationship is wise planning and mature preparation.  Below are questions aimed at surfacing the source of potential missteps.  Use these questions to assess the weak spots in your co-creation partnership that could emerge and sabotage its success as it develops and grows.

## A. OUR CULTURES:

❑ Are our cultures (what we believe, how we live, our norms, values, and styles) congruent, or at least compatible?

❑ Can our incompatibilities coexist without jeopardizing the partnership?

❑ Are there culture changes down the road that could damage our partnership?

## B. TIME:

❑ Do we have similar views on the future of our partnership? Have we been open about how long we expect it to last? Do we agree on how to end it satisfactorily?

❑ Are our philosophies on time the same?  Does urgency have the same connotation and value for both of us?  Are we equally fervent about meeting deadlines?

❑ Have we agreed on the consequences of delays or missed deadlines?

## C: CONTROL PRACTICES:

❑ Do we measure, monitor and inspect in similar or complementary ways?  Do we have compatible ways to make decisions and solve problems?

❑ Are our record-keeping, accounting, control systems and practices cut from the same cloth?

❑ Do we need to change the way we measure processes and results in order for the partnership to verify and gauge its progress?

## D: COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS:

❑ Do we communicate alike unit to unit and person to person?

❑ If things go wrong, are our early warning and repair systems and skills compatible?

❑ Are our organizations structured to support this partnership?  Have we talked about whether and how they can be improved?

## E. SHARED VALUES:

❑ Is a win-win philosophy a normal part of the way we do business?  Do we need to create a strong, more obvious win-win philosophy in either of our organizations?  Can we assertively talk about trust issues?

❑ Are our views on the meaning and importance of innovation compatible?  Will we approach ideation and risk-taking with similar tools and fervor?

❑ Are our customer service views and practices compatible?  Will we approach understanding and meeting customer needs with similar tools and fervor?  Does customer loyalty hold the same value for each of us?

## F. GOALS, ROLES AND TOLLS:

❑ Are we of one mind on the partnerships' primary goals?  Are we clear on what we're trying to achieve together?

❑ Do we have the same view of the roles we (and our organizations) will play in the partnership?  Have we talked about how we will handle conflict if our roles change after the partnership is under way?

❑ Do we have exactly the same view of the price of our partnership time, expense, resources needed, frequency of encounters and transactions, and other tolls?

## G. COMPATIBLE INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL:

❑ Within our units or organizations, do we each have the right skills and knowledge to manage this partnership effectively?

❑ Are there provisions for acquiring the intellectual capital that we need now but don't have?

❑ Have we talked about how we will deal with an unequal distribution of intellectual capital between us or between or organizations?  Is the concept of continuous learning hard-wired into this partnership?

## H. ECONOMIC RECIPROCITY:

❑ Do we agree on how to allocate the returns, profits, and benefits from this partnership?

❑ Have we talked about what we will do if the returns, profits or benefits end up larger than we expect?  Smaller?  Different?

❑ Do we share similar views and practices on business ecology issues such as expense control, savings, productivity, waste management, and efficiency?  Have we talked about how we will recognize and review incongruent practices?

## I. RESPECT FOR PRIVACY:

❑ Do privacy and confidentiality have the same meaning and value to each of us?  To each of our organizations?

❑ Have we talked about what steps we will take to recognize and review inappropriate encroachments on privacy or violations of confidentiality?

❑ Have we discussed ways to deal effectively with changing privacy needs after the partnership is underway?

## J. LEADERSHIP AND CONTROL:

❑ Will there be a leader in this partnership?  Will leadership come from an individual or a team?

❑ Does this partnership need champions or sponsors?  If so, what steps will we take to acquire and retain them?

❑ Have we talked about managing control within the partnership?  How do we address inadequate control?  Overcontrol?  Inappropriate control?

## J. LEADERSHIP AND CONTROL: