

# How to Leverage Collaboration to Make Your Business Thrive

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Following up on [last week's blog post](#) about how, in the midst of the economic downturn, the best corporate citizens built more successful ways of working with governments and NGOs, we now look at how to help organizations establish these relationships by shining a light on real-world examples and providing a platform for connecting with potential partners.

At the 2011 COMMIT!Forum we highlighted several new models of collaboration. Two of my personal favorites were the work done by the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Compass Group](#) to alleviate slave-like working conditions for migrant workers in Florida and the work of [Western Union and USAID](#) to establish an African Diaspora Marketplace to harness the wealth and entrepreneurialism of this community to jump-start new businesses in Africa itself. These initiatives exemplify the successful practices discussed in the previous

blog post. “Challenge campaigns” and “prizes,” like the COMMIT!Campaign and Clinton Global Initiative, have become increasingly popular ways of calling companies to make new “commitments” to changing the world. In reflecting on these best practices, we can also see some ways to restructure “challenge campaigns” to be more effective.

- **Relish self-interest.** When Bono said he hoped companies participating in his Product (RED) campaign would make huge profits, [he faced a firestorm of criticism especially from the non-profit sector](#). While no one benefits from unconstrained avarice, we see more, not less benefit for target communities when the business has an enduring self-interest in solving the problem at hand. The solution is not to strip away self-interest, but to frame the problem in a way that a corporate partner can engage for the long-term. In the case of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Compass Group, the Coalition could have asked Compass to just write a check. Instead, it showed Compass that it had a human and a brand interest in improving working conditions and in driving commitment through its supply chain.
- **Insist on mutual accountability.** We've made it a requirement that participants in the COMMIT!Campaign a) publicly state a goal, and b) commit to on-going coverage of the commitment in CR Magazine. Other challenge campaigns should use similar models to reinforce a culture of measurement and accountability between commitment partners.

To help further the development of these new models of collaboration, we've restructured the [COMMIT!Campaign for 2012](#). Through the campaign, governments, and NGOs can publicly articulate “commitments” — specific programs with measurable results for which they need

corporate support — and we'll work with them to find the right corporate sponsors. We'll also track and report progress from the 2011 and 2012 Campaigns in CR Magazine. If you have a worthy cause that you'd like to see become part of the [Campaign, sign on here](#).

We also want your input on how to create even stronger forms of collaboration:

- What do you think makes for the best kind of NGO-government-company collaboration?
- Do you have examples where things have gone dramatically right or dramatically wrong?
- What kinds of people need to be in leadership positions on all sides?
- How can we increase involvement on all sides?

The bad news is that the world continues to struggle through a tough economic climate. The good news is that *because* of that tough climate, creative and inspired people are not just making do, but finding ways to excel. Budget deficits have driven governments and NGOs to find corporate partners. Trust deficits mean businesses are looking to good works to build their brands. Together, like-minded people combine their financial, trust, and acumen assets to make partnerships that are all the stronger *because* of the “forced” collaboration.