



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

In the past week, all of our lives have been forever changed. I hope this letter, which I am sending to all alliance professionals, helps in our personal struggles to deal with such a seemingly senseless event.

FINDING MEANING for Alliance Professionals

Minutes after the attack on the World Trade Center, I was entering New York City by train and watched from across the East River as the Twin Towers burned, crumbled, and crashed, leaving a mushroom cloud of dust and destruction. The train, which had been halted at the entrance of the tunnel under the river, shortly thereafter entered into a city that had truly become a shadow in the valley of death. Among the broken rubble of shattered dreams and fractured spirits, I witnessed a city responding to the crisis with an urgent solemnity and cooperative compassion so unlike our stereotypical image of New Yorkers. The dark and bestial minds that had perpetrated this hideous event were being engulfed by a spiritual energy broken free, as if emancipated by the carnage itself. Indeed, in this horror, I experienced a release of something that seemed so beautiful amidst the tragedy, a truly stirring sense of caring and compassion for others, along with an orderliness and calm, in what could have been riotous calamity. It was certainly New York's finest hour.

The disaster immediately surfaced my deepest memories of death and destruction during my time in combat in Vietnam. But never in war had I experienced such an awful catastrophe. Unlike past wars, these terrorists had breached the "rules of engagement" that provided civilians with at least marginal protection from military violence. The combination of a sneak attack, using fully loaded civilian planes as weapons of mass destruction in a kamikaze raid on one of the world's largest office buildings, for no discernable purpose, was the most barbarous and loathsome of crimes.

In the intervening days, all of us have searched to find some level of understanding. Victor Frankl, perhaps the most insightful of holocaust victims, guided us in how to find meaning in such situations. When faced with a hopeless, deranged, and disturbing reality of such evil and injustice, he encouraged us to accept the challenge of exercising our most lasting and ultimately most enduring freedom: the freedom to choose both our perceptions of and our response to the event. Our human potential is uniquely at its best when it conquers adversity by transforming personal tragedy into triumph, thus turning the darkest of predicaments from victimization into empowerment, moving from being stunned and angry to a higher order of experience and action.

When I was in Vietnam, I experienced the bleakness, the fear, and the ugliness of war. I pledged to my Lord that if I survived I would dedicate my life to create a better world. For more than a decade after the war I tried several vocations, always finding something missing. Not until the world of alliances began to unfold did I know I had found my calling.

To so many of us, our work in strategic alliances is not just a business profession, but a mission with its roots solidly set in the "architecture of cooperation." Our work as alliance architects is truly distinguished among professions in that we go beyond merely the acceptance or tolerance of differences into a new realm that cherishes and embraces and honors differences. It is this noble endeavor - designing the synergy of compatible differences - that distinguishes us from those who desire to annihilate differences by making war with those souls whose thinking is dissimilar from theirs. Daily we must use honor and integrity to build the trust that is essential to all our alliances. Our mission is to transcend divergent points of view, thus co-generating bold new futures where differences become the ever-renewable source of creative energy, the essence of innovation, the dynamism of new possibilities.

Einstein observed we cannot solve the problems of today with the same level of thinking (or consciousness or methods) that created the problem in the first place. It is in this higher order of insight and understanding that those differences that seem incompatible at a lower level, reemerge in a unity of compatibility, and thus become transformed from conflict to co-creation at a higher level.

Unfortunately, however, one must be motivated to accept such a transformational insight -- one cannot shift to the higher level when one insists on experiencing the world from the perspective of self-righteous indignation, revenge, or simple steadfastness.

The day the Twin Towers fell marked a dramatic shift in the world as we know it. Let us, as a profession, rise from the depths of darkness and despair to begin to rebuild a new world based on the principles of cooperation. Held within the seed of the architecture of cooperation is the power to let us bring a new insight, a new pathway, a new hope, a new spirit, and a new power to our world.

Each day, when you use or invent best practices for alliances, you are contributing to the creation of that higher order of experience and action that makes your workplace a better place to live. Daily you are honing the skills and transmitting the abilities and multiplying the possibilities to spawn a better world around you. As your corporations globalize, you can use these proficiencies in a multitude of applications to engender not just better companies, but better relationships, better teams, better families, and better communities. In the larger span of things, step by step, alliance by alliance, you will have created a better world for all of us.

Let us not sink into despair, wallow in anger, or, in our need for justice, become trapped in the pitiless darkness of revenge.

Let us stand together to make a renewed commitment to a higher level of thinking and accomplishment, to a new set of possibilities in a co-creative, collaborative community. Let us be a beacon of compassion and cooperation to lead us into a better world where fear and terror cannot reign. Let us collectively and individually find the inner source of cooperation that so often lies dormant in all of humankind. Let us contribute our understandings and insights of the architecture of cooperation into a new world with a new vision and with a new set of values. Let it begin with each of us, today.

Sincerely,

Robert Porter Lynch,
Chairman, Association of Strategic Alliance Professionals