

Impact or Image?

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Introduction - The Partnership Paradox

This paper seeks to explore the the complex relationship between the private sector and not-for-profits in the world of environmental stewardship. The paper will, in particular, depict the complexity of trade-offs that not-for-profit organisations must consider when engaging in a private sector partnership to achieve their goals. Were the world binary, both empirical and anecdotal evidence would suggest that the private sector seeks ESG stewardship to foster good-will with investors and business partners. On the flip-side, not-for-profits would seek private sector collaboration for much needed funding, reach and direct access to its constituents, consumers ¹. We shall explore the fallacy of a binary view of global environmental stewardship in more detail, and explore the grey area of trade-offs that can allow for powerful partnerships. However, we shall allow for said fallacy to set the premise for this analysis initially, as to this day it poses a challenging question for the not-for-profit sector: Should it first and foremost serve its constituent, the (environmental) system it is devoted to, even at a cost to its reputation? Where the private sector benefits from added credibility and clout in those partnerships, not-for-profits can quickly be labeled an "accomplice", another paid element of a corporation's strategy to wash its image. This paper will explore this complex question and furthermore illustrate successful ways in which not-for-profits can enter into private sector partnerships without sacrificing image, by establishing a clear protocol of actions and internal/external accountabilities a corporation has to adhere to in order for the partnership to be acknowledged.

¹ "Emerging Opportunities for NGO-Business Partnerships", [thepartneringinitiative.org](https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf), 2008, <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf>

The Nature of Environmental Consciousness in the Private Sector

The private sector's key mandate is to monetize, to deliver goods and services to their customers and, in case of a publicly listed company, generate value for shareholders. Within this seemingly straight forward equation however, resides a universe of activity that is far more subtle in nature and yet of ever greater importance in a transparent and value based global consumer community ²: partnerships with the not-for-profit sector. The concept of strengthening one's position by inviting a high-trust partner (in this case the not-for-profit sector) to support it is far from new, and yet we are observing a powerful shift in the quality of such partnerships ³. Franck Renaudin, Founder and Executive Director of Entrepreneurs du Monde, describes the private sector's pursuit of not-for-profit partnerships as follows:

"Clearly, it is important for businesses to reinforce their brand image with the general public, and also with all of their partners, customers and suppliers. Nowadays, a company that has dubious practices is soon pointed out, becoming a target for the media, or for online petitions, with very serious consequences for its image. The reputational risk is a very real one." ⁴. In other words, businesses nowadays are required to demonstrate a deep and authentic level of commitment to the causes they elect. One that transcends a mere financial transaction and starts with the internal values to which the business holds itself and its employees accountable, or face the risk of being called out for cause washing in its many colour codes (greenwashing, pink washing, rainbow washing) ⁵.

Selsky and Parker (2005) introduce this required shift in the nature of partnerships as a change from "transactional" to "integrative", thus describing a partnership that is built on

² de Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. *et al.* Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review. *Environ Sci Eur* **32**, 19 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3>

³ "Edelmann Trust Barometer 2020", [edelman.com](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/440941/Trust%20Barometer%202020/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report.pdf?utm_campaign=Global:%20Trust%20Barometer%202020&utm_source=Website), 2020, https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/440941/Trust%20Barometer%202020/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report.pdf?utm_campaign=Global:%20Trust%20Barometer%202020&utm_source=Website

⁴ Menascé, David NGO-Business Partnerships: a Win-Win Model, *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 14 | 2016, Online since 15 April 2016, connection on 12 August 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4104>

⁵ "Green-washing, pink-washing and now rainbow-washing: why authenticity is key when it comes to corporate responsibility", [reputation-inc.com](https://www.reputation-inc.com/our-thinking/green-washing-pink-washing-and-now-rainbow-washing-why-authenticity-is-key-when-it-comes-to-corporate-responsibility), 2020, <https://www.reputation-inc.com/our-thinking/green-washing-pink-washing-and-now-rainbow-washing-why-authenticity-is-key-when-it-comes-to-corporate-responsibility>

common goals, a power and responsibility equilibrium between parties, and a holistic approach to solving the issue that is the elected target throughout the supply chain of the business partner ⁶. L'Occitane's activity around its shea butter supply chain is a prime example. Their production work-force, predominantly female, was able to generate household income from shea butter production for only 6 months of the year. L'Occitane took the decision to invest effort, time and financial resources (in collaboration with Entrepreneurs du Monde) to create alternative revenue streams for that work-force in the form of up-skill activities and savings/credit programs to ensure financial stability year-round ⁷. This direct involvement in a community, active participation in the partnership and respect for Entrepreneurs du Monde's leadership and local access has made this collaboration truly integrative. Aside from the positive and desired effect on corporate reputation and shareholder goodwill, authentic partnerships of this nature also contribute powerfully to the company's workforce when it comes to morale, perspective and alignment with one's employer's value. Borwankar and Ramakrishna (2009) have described this effect as *"NGO partnerships offer the private sector capability building opportunities that have been described as "profound or [for] some as transformational [for its employees]"* ⁸.

This paper focuses on the complexities of private sector/not-for-profit partnerships, specifically from the not-for-profit perspective, yet a certain context-giving highlight cannot be omitted: ESG, CSR and sustainability in and of themselves have transitioned from mere descriptors to businesses with competitive pressures in their own right. Various certification have been on the rise for over a decade, and are evolving into ever more self-sufficient businesses. B-Labs has declared an operating budget of USD 12mio in 2019, 68% of which stems from earned income vs philanthropic contributions, up from only 29% in 2013 ⁹. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) have increased their market penetration through blue

⁶ Selsky, J.W. and Parker, B. (2005), "Cross-Sector Partnerships to Address Social Issues: Challenges to Theory and Practice", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 31 No. 6, December 2005 849-873 DOI: 10.1177/0149206305279601.

⁷ Menascé, David, NGO-Business Partnerships: a Win-Win Model, *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 14 | 2016, Online since 15 April 2016, connection on 12 August 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4104>

⁸ Borwankar, A. and Ramakrishna Velamuri, S. (2009), "The potential for management development in NGO-private sector partnerships", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 326-343. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710910947362>

⁹ "Funders & Finances", bcorporation.net, 2020, <https://bcorporation.net/about-b-lab/funders-and-finances>

label significantly over the years. The MSC is engaged with over 15% of marine wild-catch as of 2019 ¹⁰, earning a commission for every product sold carrying the MSC label, a process which has tripled their income between 2009 and 2018, to GBP 24.8mio ¹¹. Nestlé's recent move to switch certification for its KitKat confectionary from Fairtrade to Rainforest Alliance has made a splash in the international community, including pleas from Fairtrade to rethink the decision ¹², further highlighting the fact that beyond pure 'do-good' morale, environmental stewardship has indeed become a business in its own right.

Not-For-Profits - The Dependent Hero

We all know the big names out there, the big international do-gooders that bring us a light of hope for positive social and sustainable developments the world over. Greenpeace, the WWF, Oxfam, the Global Fund, GAVI Vaccine Alliance, and an endless list of smaller and regional players seeking to serve their cause. What all of them have in common, as the name not-for-profit suggests, is their dependency on donations to remain operational. Sources are wide and varied in capital contributions, from individuals and households seeking to be part of a good cause to high-net worth philanthropists and their backing organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bloomberg and Richard Branson. For the purposes of this paper however, we will look at contributions from the private sector, and the varied way in which not-for profits engage with it. The Global Fund explores this in their 2019 position paper entitled *The Power of Partnerships: "Private sector partnerships are critical to the success of the Global Fund. To date, the private sector has contributed over US\$2.7 billion to the Global Fund, and provided valuable expertise that has helped maximize the impact of our investments."* ¹³. Two valuable assets that the private

¹⁰ "Global Impacts Report Update", [msc.org](https://www.msc.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/what-we-are-doing/global-impact-reports/msc-global-impacts-update-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=15813b9b_6), June 2019, https://www.msc.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/what-we-are-doing/global-impact-reports/msc-global-impacts-update-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=15813b9b_6

¹¹ "Marine Stewardship Council Triples Income in Less Than a Decade", [intrafish.com](https://www.intrafish.com), February 2019, <https://www.intrafish.com/marketplace/marine-stewardship-council-triples-income-in-less-than-a-decade/2-1-550480>

¹² "Nestlé urged to 'keep KitKat Fairtrade' as it moves to Rainforest Alliance", [foodnavigator.com](https://www.foodnavigator.com), June 2020, <https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/06/24/Nestle-urged-to-keep-KitKat-Fairtrade-as-it-moves-to-Rainforest-Alliance#>

¹³ "The Power of Partnerships", [theglobalfund.org](https://www.theglobalfund.org), September 2019, https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8703/publication_privatesectorpartnerships_focuson_en.pdf?u=637284230160000000

sector can bring to a not-for-profit find mention here: capital and capacity. There is a third platform through which these engagements can be surveyed, which is the promotion of environmentally conscious behaviour in the private sector, as well as the public establishment of pressure towards business to work against the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit in equal measure. Capacity speaks to an industry's reach through its supply chains and influence in specific geographies ¹⁴. Its involvement has the power to provide access to a not-for-profit's constituents that would otherwise be impossible, through more sophisticated logistics, technology and sometimes political pull to deliver e.g. a nature conservation project ¹⁵. What sounds rather dreamy however comes with a trade-off risk which must be anticipated and carefully manoeuvred: a risk to one's reputation (or image). As Elbers (2004) points out, reputation is a not-for-profit's greatest asset and must be protected at all cost. Where businesses generate revenue from their operations, not-for-profits generate cash flow largely from donations, and are retain their competitive edge through effectiveness and sense of how honourable they are ¹⁶. As has been demonstrated above, the private sector is notorious for engaging in 'washing' operations to polish its image and summon shareholder good-will if listed on the stock exchange. Of particular concern in the frame of this paper is so called 'green washing', an activity in which an organization seeks to demonstrate good environmental stewardship without systematically addressing the environmental and climate impact of its own operations ¹⁷. It is easy for not-for-profits to be labeled an enabler of such activities in return for capital. Capital however, is often needed dearly to serve the organization's mission, and hence the question of this paper is asked: Should a not-for-profit prioritize impact or image? The answer we found is that one cannot exist without the other. Image is key, and a tarnished one can deter other sponsors from engaging with one's organization as it garners the reputation to be 'bought' by the private sector. Another factor that can impede a fruitful partnership is that the globally available pot

¹⁴ Elbers, W. (2004), "Doing Business with Business", Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN) Radboud University Nijmegen, pp. 43-51, <https://eldis.org/document/A14286>

¹⁵ Menascé, D. (2020), "NGO-Business Partnerships: a Win-Win Model", *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 14 | 2016, Online since 15 April 2016, connection on 12 August 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4104>

¹⁶ "How Non-For-Profit Organizations Use Reputational Risk Management", sloanreview.mit.edu, February 2014, <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-nonprofit-organizations-use-reputational-risk-management/>

¹⁷ "Greenwashing", [investopedia.org](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/greenwashing.asp), January 2020, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/greenwashing.asp>

of funding is limited, and advertizing credible private sector partners can attract competing not-for-profits with the power to deplete said funding ¹⁸. Amidst the tug and pull of image or impact, smaller organizations with financial dependency run the risk of deflated power, as culture and independence can be corrupted by the more powerful partner (aka a business) ¹⁹. This can negatively impact employee morale and sense of affiliation, performance, credibility and ability to live up to the established vision, which will inevitably hurt the cause which the not-for-profit has assigned to itself. Yet, and it couldn't have been said better than by a not-for-profit leader interviewed by The Partnering Initiative x Accenture, often times such risk is a necessary evil: " *We ask ourselves quite often whether our partnering activities are „green washing“ companies. We also agonise as to whether being funded by a company to do our work, even if through this we raise awareness of environmental issues more widely, is a conflict of interest for an environmental NGO. My personal view is that when we weigh up the moral consequences of our decision to work with business, and because the relationship enables us to get things done more efficiently and effectively, the collaboration is entirely appropriate and justified.*" ²⁰.

Risk however, must be managed, specifically in the climate change arena and possibly the most well-known type of washing, greenwashing, as is illustrated by the WWF's entanglement in a German documentary called "Der Pakt mit dem Panda - Was der WWF uns nicht erzahlt". Loosely, this would translate to "The Pact with the Panda - What the WWF isn't telling us", however for the English translation, a reference to The Silence of the Lambs was elected, "The Silence of the Pandas". While most claims the documentary made were swiftly debunked (mostly centred around industry partnership), the environmental stewardship arena is one driven by emotion, one in which fact can be outweighed by perception easily ²¹, and recovery from the reputational damage done by the documentary

¹⁸ "Emerging Opportunities for NGO-Business Partnerships", thepartneringinitiative.org, 2008, <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf>

¹⁹ Selsky, J.W. and Parker, B. (2005), "Cross-Sector Partnerships to Address Social Issues: Challenges to Theory and Practice", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 31 No. 6, December 2005 849-873 DOI: 10.1177/0149206305279601.

²⁰ "Emerging Opportunities for NGO-Business Partnerships", thepartneringinitiative.org, 2008, <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf>

²¹ "How Non-For-Profit Organizations Use Reputational Risk Management", sloanreview.mit.edu, February 2014, <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-nonprofit-organizations-use-reputational-risk-management/>

was lengthy. To further illustrate risk of this nature, but beyond that methods that not-for-profits can deploy to mitigate it, we have invited Mr. Sudhanshu Sarronwala, former Executive Director Communications & Marketing at the WWF, for a fireside chat.

Fireside Chat with Sudhanshu Sarronwala (formerly WWF)

The below interview was transcribed and signed-off by Mr. Sarronwala

Date: August 11, 2020

Interviewer:

Mr. Sarronwala, thank you so much for joining me today. So, you have worked in and around the civil society space from a variety of fascinating angles: Corporate, tech entrepreneur, leading environmental NGO and are now off to change the world solo. Could you tell us a bit about what kind of partnerships between your organizations and others shaped your experience in particular? Hint: examples from the ESG space welcome!

Mr. Sarronwala:

Certainly Tom, glad to be here. When working with the WWF, ESG was naturally the arena in which we played. Our partnerships stretched across the private, public and NGO sector, and the question for us was always who are the individual organizations and platforms that have the power to transform an entire sector or industry according to our goals. The private sector was very important to deliver the overall WWF agenda, as our perspective was that a problem cannot be solved without the party that caused it being at the table. We also worked a lot with public/private forums like the World Economic Forum that allowed policy players to nudge closer to the discussion. Obviously the UN and its subsidiaries were important partners for us as they have the power to convene a whole variety of other parties for the WWF to engage with. An example would be the UN Convention on Biological Diversity which falls under the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and brings together

governments, the public sector and NGOs. In terms of deciding whether or not to partner with someone from the private sector, one needs to be clear in selecting only those organizations that have a direct impact on the problem you are trying to solve, and which of those have the power to shift the behaviour of an entire sector.

Interviewer:

I would imagine the WWF used a set of guiding principles to make these decisions?

Mr. Sarronwala:

Absolutely, I would describe our approach as tiered into 3 levels. One is to maintain and defend a clear blacklist, exceptions to which require board sign-off. These are usually industries that cause direct societal harm with the products they offer, such as arms, alcohol or tobacco. Secondly, you identify the companies that could have a direct impact on advancing your agenda, distill them down to the top 5-10, and allocate them to the country of origin so that it becomes clear which team is to work with them. Lastly, a strict set of guidelines needs to be in place to which those companies must adhere before the partnership can begin. For instance, if we want to work on sustainable forestry, the partnering corporation must use Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper. It is crucial that a reliable third party validates adherence to these protocols.

Interviewer:

That's incredibly interesting, thank you. Have you ever encountered a conflict of interest in this space, a moment when you decided to work with a private sector organization despite it having a strongly negative impact on the environment?

Mr. Sarronwala:

Absolutely, this happened during my tenure with the WWF with a cement manufacturer.

Cement has a powerfully negative impact on the environment during production. Yet, in an

industrialized world, we had to realize that cement isn't going anywhere anytime soon, so the best we can do is to work with them on best practices and reduce that impact as much as possible. As an NGO, we came a bit under fire from other NGOs that did not support our strategy, but we stood by our choices.

Interviewer:

How would you define the needs base to enter into such partnerships, both from the private sector side, and that of not-for-profits, what drives them?

Mr. Sarronwala:

Non-for-profits don't always partner with the private sector. Some, like the WWF, do. Others, like Greenpeace, have a strict policy against it. From a financial point of view, for most large and global NGOs contributions from the private sector is by design kept small (for the WWF the cap is at 15%), because we must remain weary of accusations to be greenwashing corporations. When you look at smaller not-for-profits on national level, private sector sponsorships are much more common. The private sector on the other hand would look for not-for-profit partnerships to lend credibility to the implementation of its various sustainability agendas. To bear witness to your implementation, aids you with it, or simply certifies that your efforts are in line with international standards. At the WWF, we were always very clear with our private sector partners: we are happy to come in as a critical friend, but we will also go public if we find that there is a lack of genuine conviction. We also ensured that any financial contributions from the private sector went directly into the projects on which we focused together.

Interviewer:

That makes complete sense, thank you so much for these insights. We are currently examining the nature of private sector/not-for-profit partnerships, to explore the potential for reputational risk, particular on the not-for-profit side. Would you say there is necessarily a trade-off between receiving aid (financial, logistical or capability related) from the private sector and damaging one's reputation? Or can not-for-profits have their cake and eat it too?

Mr. Sarronwala:

Well, the identification process to find the right corporation is by design very painstaking and complex, which makes necessary the involvement of time and cost for the not-for-profit. So the question is: can the partnership yield powerful contributions to your agenda and cause and make an impact in the sector? The WWF's relationship with Coca Cola was an example of a somewhat strange partnership like that. Requiring high volumes of water (for the formula and the corn crops), we managed to work with them and managed to halve the amount of water required to produce one bottle of Coca Cola, which had a significant impact on global water supply. The big question should be: can we achieve true and systemic transformation together, rather than just a small tactical shift?

Interviewer:

Do you have any advice for corporate and not-for-profit readers of this paper and interview on how to mitigate risk on both fronts?

Mr. Sarronwala:

Transparency. You cannot have skeletons in your closet that come to haunt you later. Clear disclosure is essential on the things you have already done, the things you haven't yet but are planning to and in what concrete ways, and what you need help with. If a not-for-profit gets involved, it needs to be public about it from the start. Stakeholder management is an important factor that impacts the success of the partnership as well, and begins before any kind of formal agreement is entered into.

Interviewer:

Thank you so much for your time Mr. Sarronwala.

Maximizing Impact and Minimizing Risk to Image and Legitimacy

As illustrated, not-for-profit organizations have a delicate balancing act to perform if desiring to serve their cause with maximum impact yet minimized risk to their image and legitimacy as a reputable partner. The key to legitimacy is the development of robust guidelines for private sector partnerships towards environmental and climate crisis issues, covering every aspect of the engagement: Screening, transactions, accountability, credibility of the partner and maintaining independence throughout the partnership. Countless organizations have established manifests to that effect and elected a variety of approaches. Here, we want to reflect on a blend of many that we believe can serve not-for-profits as a guide to assembling their own, with actionability and realism as goals.

Build Internal Alignment First

A crucial first step is the internal alignment around one's own organization, its mission, its values, and the prospective private sector partner. As Heap points out ²², internal alignment is critical to show-case your organization as a credible party that engages partners with determination and a holistic approach to achieving its vision. Lack of internal alignment can lead to private sector partners being approached by multiple individuals from the same not-for-profit, cause internal infighting about territories and political influence, and inevitably derail the partnership. Furthermore, successful partnerships with the private sector have as a base a shared vision and communication mechanism to provide an effective checks and

²² Heap, S. (2000), "Ngo-Business Partnerships", *Public Management: An International Journal of Research and Theory*, 2:4, pp. 555-563, DOI: [10.1080/14719030000000033](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030000000033)

balances system that is built on mutual respect and a sense of equal powers ²³. Such a mechanic cannot be established in a sustainable fashion unless the partnership-seeking party has its internal affairs in order to begin with.

Do Your Homework and Screen

When planning to engage in a private sector partnership towards achieving climate change objectives, it is of pivotal importance for the not-for-profit in question to rigorously screen the organization in question. Some lead assumptions must be checked in all cases:

- What ESG policies are in place?
- How has the prospective company actioned its own ESG ambition, what programs are they leading independently and to what effect?
- What other partnerships has the company engaged with previously, is engaged in currently, and to what effect have they been concluded? Specifically any notions of these partnerships in (social) media must be inspected cautiously to allow a gage as to what reputation the prospective partner has gained over time, and whether or not they were called out for inauthentic behaviour (see 'cause washing'). USAID has developed a comprehensive set of questions to ask ahead of any partner engagement ²⁴.
- Is the partner compliant with the not-for-profits engagement principles? There are myriad standards that can be referenced and applied to one's own organization, and laid out conveniently by the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development ²⁵.

Another critical element to consider is organizational complexity. Many corporates will deploy their ESG efforts and funding not directly, but through foundations set-up for that particular purpose, in an effort to divert attention away from perceived commercial interest and to gain

²³ Selsky, J.W. and Parker, B. (2005), "Cross-Sector Partnerships to Address Social Issues: Challenges to Theory and Practice", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 31 No. 6, December 2005 849-873 DOI: 10.1177/0149206305279601.

²⁴ "Private Sector Engagement and Due Diligence: Reputational Risk Assessment", [usaid.gov, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/PrivateSectorEngagementDueDiligence.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/PrivateSectorEngagementDueDiligence.pdf)

²⁵ "Choosing who to Partner with: Approaches to Screening out Businesses with Negative Environmental and Social Impacts", [enterprise-development.org, January 2017, https://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/DCED_Screening_SynthesisNote_31Oct2013.pdf](https://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/DCED_Screening_SynthesisNote_31Oct2013.pdf)

authenticity. It is of crucial importance to understand the organizational affiliation behind such foundations to truly see who it is one is entering into a partnership with.

Demonstrate Independence and Integrity

As demonstrated throughout this paper, reputation and legitimacy are the not-for-profit sectors greatest asset, their strongest selling point to attract donations. Maintaining it is of crucial import, and a first step to ensure it is to move from a purely transactional partnership to an integrative one. A partnership that is not simply about the receipt of assets, but transcends into shared governance, decision making within the company and creating the road map for implementing the ESG/climate change initiative at a local level as a shared effort. In his interview with David Menascé in 2016, Franck Renaudin, Founder and Executive Director of Entrepreneurs du Monde, makes a striking argument about the finances of private sector partnerships. Easily the prime target for criticism of a not-for-profits' credibility being 'purchased' by the private sector, the financial nature of such partnerships must be navigated with great care. The fact that the not-for-profit sector relies on donations to remain operational is not a secret, and therein lies the key to staying ahead of bad press: vocally acknowledge the received funding value, and demonstrate that it is matched out of other revenue streams to the best of the organization's ability. Pay for what you can yourself, and demonstrate it with pride ²⁶.

A second pathway to increased perception of independence and integrity is the involvement of a third party validator whose standards the private sector partner must adhere to. Selsky and Parker (2005) have called this approach an "enabling" structure, and examples of such structures have already found reference in this paper, such as B-Labs, MSC, Rainforest Alliance or Fair Trade.

²⁶ Menascé, D (2020), "NGO-Business Partnerships: a Win-Win Model", *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 14 | 2016, Online since 15 April 2016, connection on 12 August 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4104>

Own it

Once the decision has been made to enter into a partnership and it is publicly up and running, there is no backing out of it. Both parties have to be vocal and proud of what they are achieving together, and open about the nature of the partnership. Having a risk management plan and related position communications in place is crucial, to respond to negative backlash from detractors. The not-for-profit partner's greatest asset is a solid ethical partnership doctrine, as well as a public perspective on what private sector partnerships mean to them. In an interview ran by The Partnering Initiative in 2008, a not-for-profit leader reflected on this matter as follows: *"We ask ourselves quite often whether our partnering activities are „green washing“ companies. We also agonise as to whether being funded by a company to do our work, even if through this we raise awareness of environmental issues more widely, is a conflict of interest for an environmental NGO. My personal view is that when we weigh up the moral consequences of our decision to work with business, and because the relationship enables us to get things done more efficiently and effectively, the collaboration is entirely appropriate and justified."* ²⁷.

²⁷ "Emerging Opportunities for NGO-Business Partnerships", [thepartneringinitiative.org](https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf), 2008, <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Emerging-opportunities-for-NGO-business-partnerships1.pdf>

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