
HOW TO BUILD LASTING BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

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Coming into this internship I didn't know much about building meaningful connections with external partners. I wanted to learn more about this and I felt that my Brand Partnerships team would be a great resource to me as I strived to meet this goal.

Creating business connections can be tricky, especially when your only means of communication are via email. This is probably the biggest challenge of any Brand Partnerships team, but is even more of an issue when you aren't working for a large, nationally known company. Going into my internship with Nisolo, I knew that I had to make it a goal of mine to learn how to build the connections, not only for a one-time collaboration, but also for a lasting long-term partnership.

One of the main reasons why I think this is such an important goal to have is because human connection is relevant in any job across all industries. In addition to being a part of life outside

the office. Being able to connect on different levels will allow me to better myself through learning from other people and their unique experiences. Being on a small Brand Partnerships team allowed me to really learn from my mentors and work towards this goal in an encouraging way. A great amount of trust was put in me, which allowed me to be confident in my decisions. I think this is part of what led to many great partnerships over the course of three months.

STARTING OUT

The beginning steps of a partnership are fairly easy. You have to do your research to decide who you want to partner with based on who they are, what they represent, and if you think they will be a good fit with you and your company. Once you have your list of potential partners, the outreach begins. I was lucky in that my teammates were able to give me a template for outreach emails that made it simple and straightforward. This is a template that they have found success with in the past, so I was confident in using it to build connections of my own.

One of their tips in getting responses during the outreach period was to customize each of the initial emails so that it would sound less robotic and would help build the connection early on. This would look like adding in something you noticed from their blog or asking about their kids or family if that's something they frequently post about. This makes sense because I would be much more likely to respond to an email if I can tell the person really took the time to learn about who I am and made the extra effort.

TRIAL & ERROR

The hardest part about setting out to learn something new is accepting failure, especially when you have to rely on others in order to succeed. In sending out some of my first emails to potential partners, I knew that there was a chance I wouldn't hear back. I didn't know, though, just how many emails would result in radio silence. This was difficult for me because it feels like you're being rejected, but without the courtesy of actually telling you you've been rejected. It seems strange, but the silence somehow makes it worse. It is also frustrating because there isn't really a rhyme or reason for the lack of response. Some partners who are fairly well-known in the fashion world will at least have a publicist respond saying they aren't interested, while some micro-influencer with a far smaller following will never give you the time of day.

One of the key points that I learned early on is the importance of customizing the template I sent out. It's so important to make the partner feel like they are the only person you want to work with. I learned that the best way to do this is by commenting on something they are doing that's unique to them, whether it is the style of the photos they post or the different perspective on their blog posts. If the partner has a family that they post with it also benefits to comment on their kids or pets.

Going through this trial and error process is hard, but it's also something that will be beneficial throughout life. There are always going to be issues that I have to work through using this process, and I need to be prepared to be unsuccessful the first time around, and maybe even the second and third times as well. This is arguably even better practice because the trials are difficult to base on any one factor. In other areas, it will hopefully be more apparent what area needs to be changed and where the trial went wrong. There are so many reasons that a partner I reach out to doesn't respond to the email or doesn't want to work with the company, and it's not necessarily based on anything I said in the outreach email. Recognizing this is something I learned early on and was very important to push me to keep going.

FINDING SUCCESS

If you have ever sent out emails to dozens of people and almost never received a response, you know what it feels like to receive the first response. This one response may feel like a huge success, even if they do not say yes to whatever you asked of them. In my case, I felt this same way, but my first response was someone who did want to work with me. This was such an incredible feeling because I chose someone who I thought would be a good fit with our company and she responded that she also felt she would be able to positively represent our brand. I was able to learn from this experience and choose more people who were similar to her because I felt that I would have a better shot working with them.

I also still looked for people and brands that might not initially seem like the right fit, but companies that have similar values to Nisolo. This was important for me because I wanted to prove that there wasn't just one type of partner that would want to work with us, and I wanted to expand the network of people who were interested in working

with the brand, even if there wasn't a partnership that was started directly between the two of us. Success can also look like building a connection with someone who can connect you with other individuals or brands that are a better fit for you to work with.

WHAT FAILURE TAUGHT ME

While my goal was to learn how to build connections with external partners, within that was also learning how to cope with failure. Inherently when you are going through the process of trial and error, you are setting yourself up to fail. I continuously reminded myself that it's normal to fail when you are learning something new. Failing in this sense also does not mean that you have failed in your learning. Failures here look like someone never responding to an email or saying they don't want to work with you. But this doesn't necessarily have anything to do with what was said in the email.

Sometimes I would email people and be quite sure that they would never respond to me. This doesn't mean that I wasn't going to try, because, on the off chance they did reply, that would feel like one of the biggest successes. These were people like celebrities and editors-in-chief of major publications.

None of the ever responded to my emails, but I stopped caring because I thought about the possibility they might respond, and that made it worth it to me.

BUILDING FUTURE CONNECTIONS

I think the most important thing I learned through all of this is that I now know how I can build connections with people in the business world. This doesn't have to be in the exact same way as I learned at Nisolo, building a connection with the brand and external partners. But I know what's important to include in the initial outreach period. I know when to capitalize on knowing personal details about their lives and when it's appropriate to include them. I know how to recognize when someone is a good fit for the company and how to negotiate to strike a deal even if it's not in the typical way a partnership goes.

I know that I will be able to make connections, whether it be with business partners, with brands, or with colleagues. I now have all the knowledge necessary to be successful and have lasting connections with people in whatever industry I may end up. I am confident in my abilities and I know I will be able to use this knowledge in my career.
