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ISO/TS 44007

Collaborative business relationship management — Guidance for ecosystem collaborations

Relation d'affaires collaborative — Recommandations pour le écosystème collaboratif

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Ecosystems are becoming a predominant business model in which businesses, governmental bodies and other organizations interoperate and collaborate. Notable strategy advisories project that between USD 60 trillion to USD 100 trillion of economic value can be generated from ecosystems, constituting a third of the global economy.

One reason behind the rise of ecosystems is that they are exponential value generators. While both bilateral alliances and ecosystems have the capacity to continuously generate new output, ecosystems, being multilateral, facilitate ongoing value creation by enabling connections among a diverse range of organizations. Other sources of value include reduced costs, increased market share, enhanced competitive advantage and resiliency through business disruptions.

However, a different approach and different mindset is required to manage these multidimensional, multilateral business relationships. While collaborative management processes remain relevant, it is necessary to rethink how to apply them.

For example, in the case of a multi-party ecosystem of nine partners, a nine-way governance model that adopts traditional collaborative working practices would be neither efficient nor agile and cannot scale. Instead, a set of adaptive and simple (or “light-weight”) principles that enable creative interactions, guide behaviour and are scalable can be codified to support an ecosystem’s ongoing value creation and value distribution. Principles are more adaptable to harnessing the network effect of the creative capability within an ecosystem community of diverse organizations.

By adopting common frameworks, ecosystem members can reduce the time and complexity of figuring out the collaborative processes. Through adoption of these principles, individual members can assess and address their capability to collaborate effectively and ensure that the right processes, leadership and mindset are in place to enable success. Adhering to ecosystem collaboration principles enables ecosystem members to focus more on value-creating activities, thus increasing productivity and accelerating innovation.

There are various configurations of ecosystems, and they differ in scale. The application of collaboration principles adapts according to the ecosystem’s scale and configuration. For example, in a small ecosystem of half a dozen partners, members can manage the added complexity of having six different voices and interests. This is possible, but far from easy, and will break down as more partners are added. As an ecosystem grows, a more self-sustaining and principles-driven approach is necessary for effective ecosystem governance and development. Collaboration principles do not replace having sound practices and policies, but they do enable lighter-weight and more programmatic approaches.

Large-scale ecosystems can be comprised of dozens or even thousands of partner members. In these configurations, there is typically a single orchestrator or a small number of partners who form the orchestration core. Other ecosystem partners have much less influence and participate through self-alignment to the rules and guidance set by the orchestrators.

Partner ecosystems also have a life cycle, over which time members can join and leave and experience stages similar to that of other collaborative business relationships: strategic, engagement and management.

This document is based on the 12 principles of collaborative business relationships given in ISO/TR 44000:

- relationship management (see [4.1](#));
- visions and values (see [4.2](#));
- business objectives (see [4.3](#));
- collaborative leadership (see [4.4](#));
- governance and processes (see [4.5](#));
- collaborative competence and behaviour (see [4.6](#));
- trust and commitment to mutual benefit (see [4.7](#));

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- information and knowledge sharing (see [4.9](#));
- risk management (see [4.10](#));
- relationship measurement and optimization (see [4.11](#));
- exit strategy (see [4.12](#)).

ISO/TR 44000 describes each principle, explains why it is important to the organization and provides examples of the benefits gained from applying it.

To maximize their benefit, they should be addressed collectively, and not in isolation or in any particular sequence.

The requirements for achieving a collaborative ecosystem are contained in ISO 44001 which generally addresses collaborations of all sizes, types and configurations.

This document provides insight into how collaborative working principles can be applied to manage multilateral ecosystems for organizations of all sizes and their stakeholders. It endeavours to address the unique challenges in implementing collaborative relationships in multi-partner configurations. It is a standalone document but can also be used with reference to ISO/TR 44000 or ISO 44001.