The Women Collaboration Project

By Lisa N. Alexander
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June 2014

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I've heard their stories personally. Women entrepreneurs and small business owners who describe their collaboration projects with other women business owners as nightmares and their vow to never work with another woman ever again.

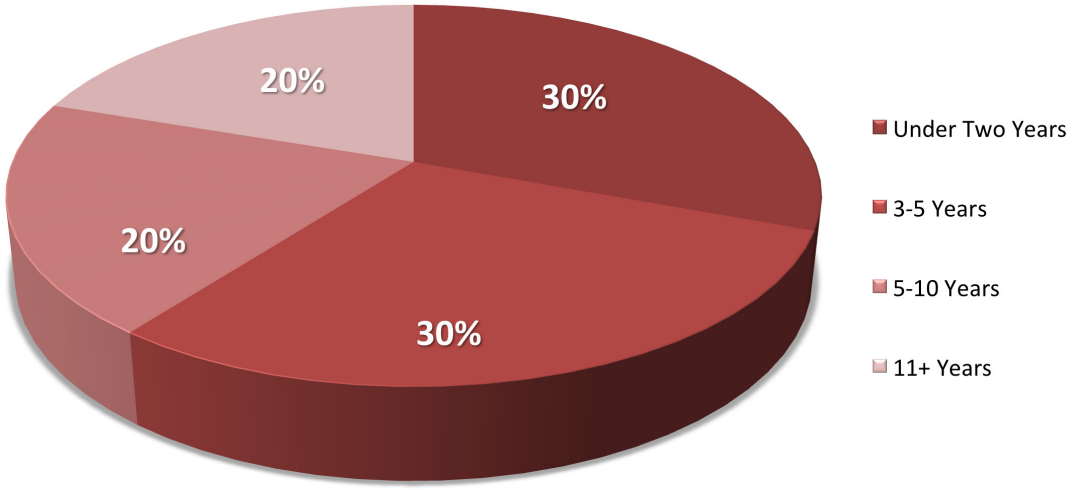
The tales of sabotage running rampant through Corporate America and women behaving badly could be considered the norm. It also seemed that this same leeriness to work together could be said of female entrepreneurs in the marketplace. If so many women were reluctant to work with other women, why did the idea that women are more likely to collaborate with each other prevail?

After hearing the report about women in the U.S. Congress who were reaching across the aisle and creating bills to move this country out of its stalemate, I decided to ask the women business owners I knew and to those to whom I was connected to on social media about their collaborative habits in an informal survey. These 81 women own businesses in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. and they shared their stories with me.

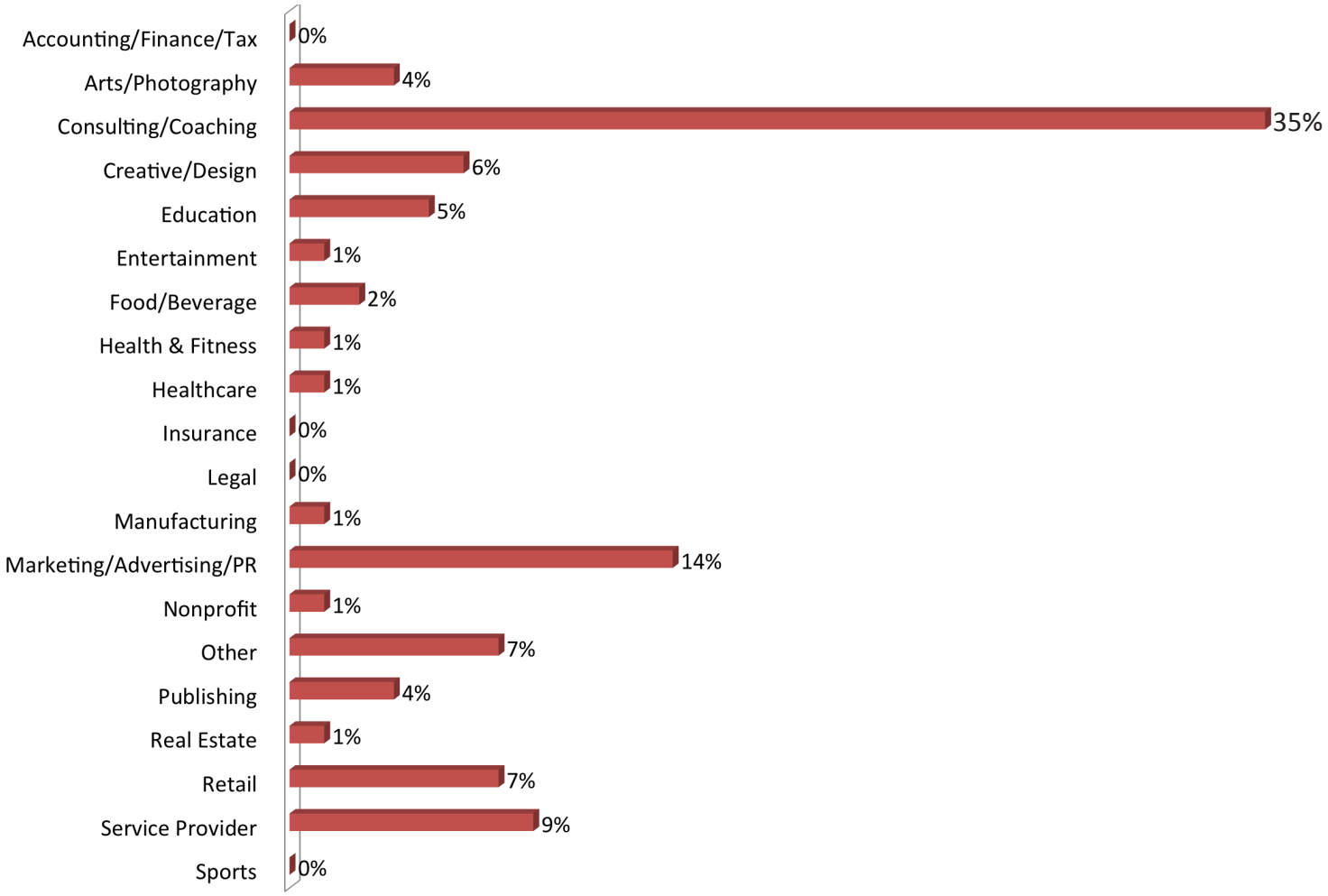
While tales of women behaving badly and projects gone awry make good happy hour conversation, this small sample of businesswomen tell a different story.

The Women Collaboration Project

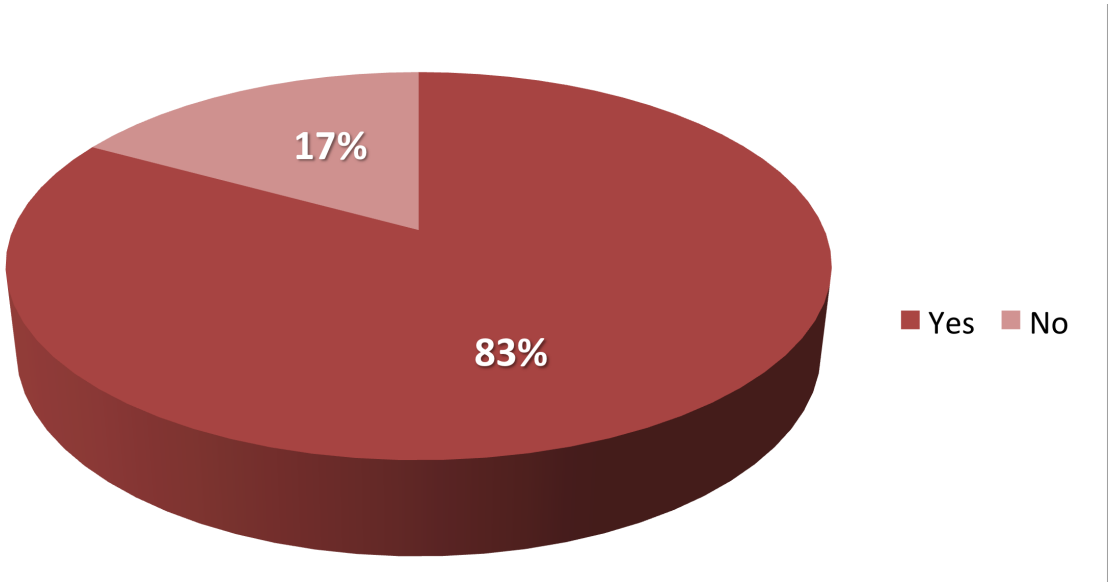
Years In Business



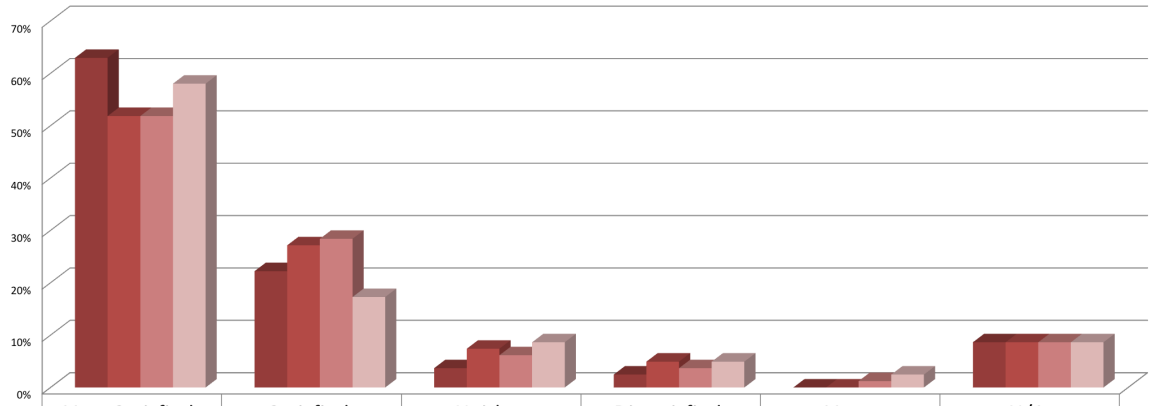
Business Industry



Collaboration History - Have You Collaborated with Woman Owned Business?

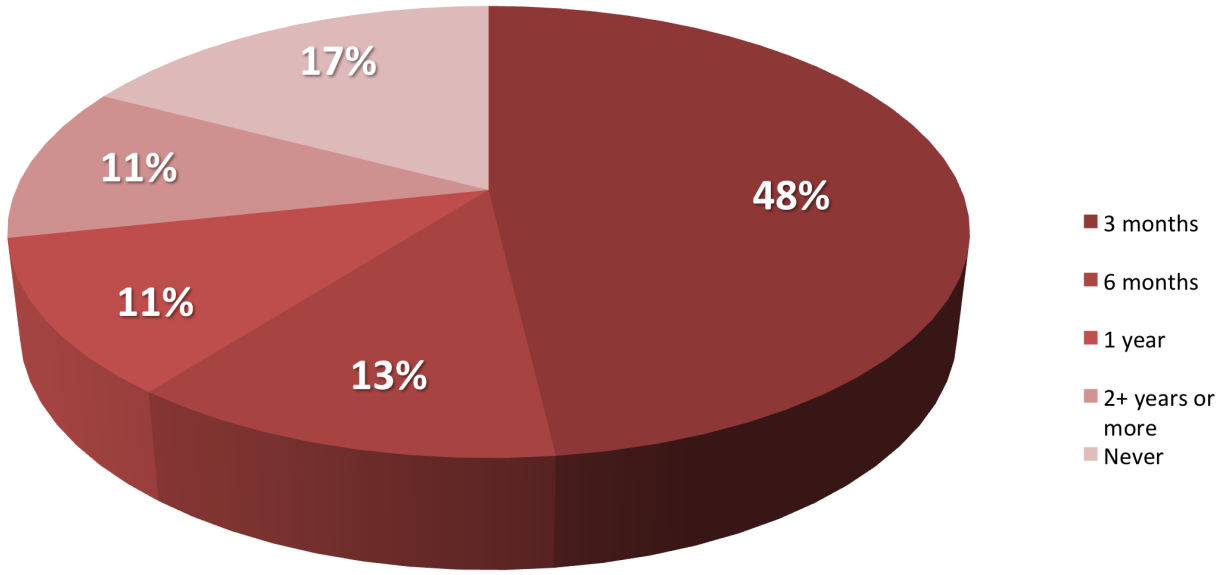


Collaboration Rating

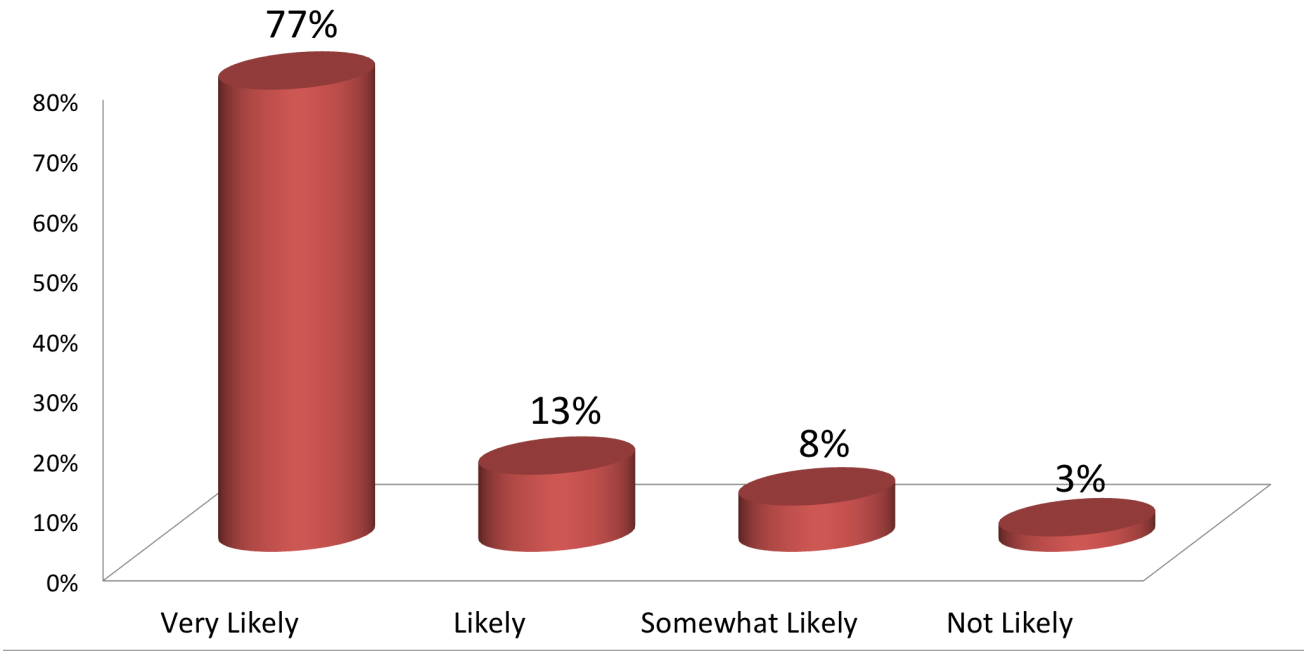


	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	N/A
Type of project	63%	22%	4%	2%	0%	9%
Quality of collaborative partner	52%	27%	7%	5%	0%	9%
Communication during project	52%	28%	6%	4%	1%	9%
Win-Win for all partners	58%	17%	9%	5%	2%	9%

Time of Last Collaboration - When was last collaboration project?

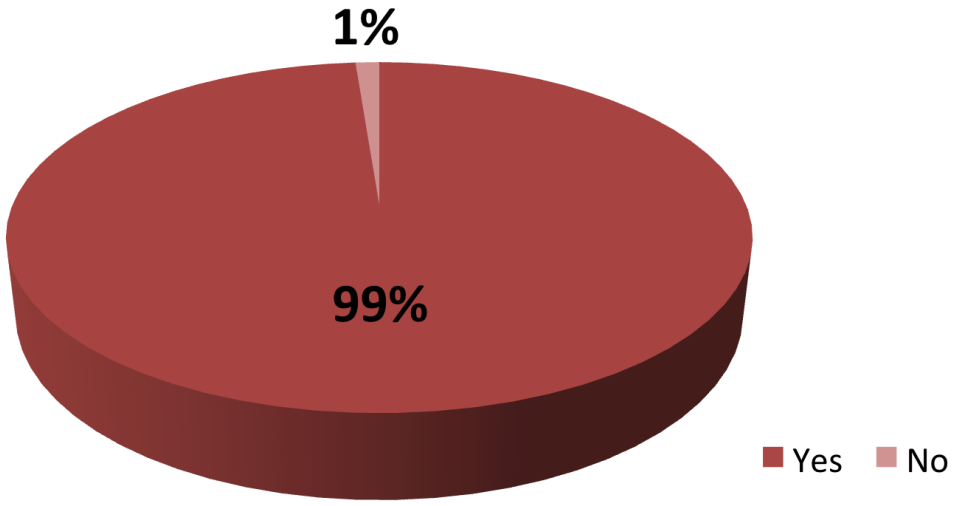


Likelihood to Collaborate Again in Next 12 Months



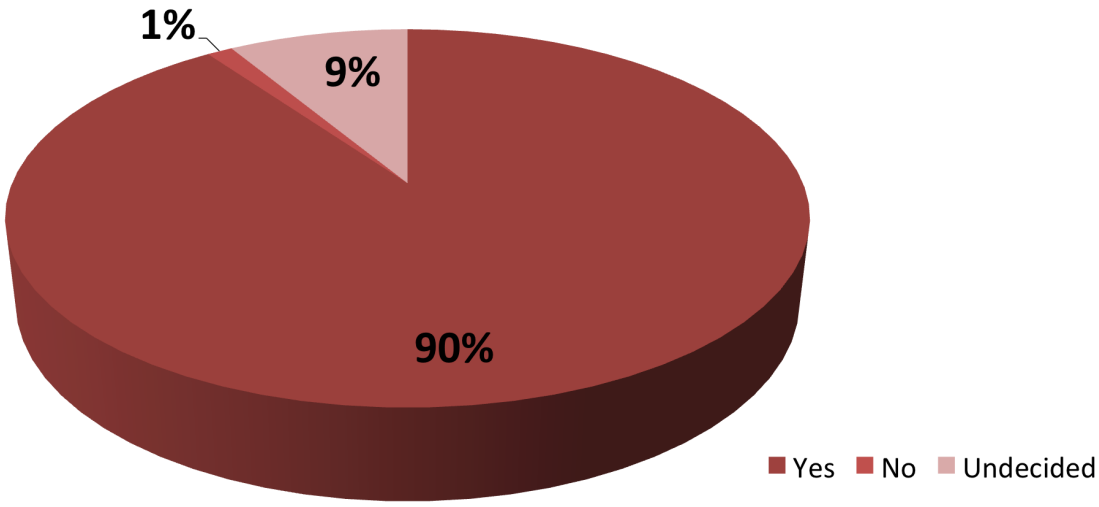
Suggest Collaboration:

Would you recommend another woman-owned business participate in a collaborative project?



Collaboration for Growth:

Do you think collaborative projects are a good way to grow ones business?



In Their Own Words

“I loved the idea of working with another woman, and perhaps next time if there ever is a next time I will make sure that our moral standings are on the same page!”

“In my industry women can be wonderful or dreadful.”

“It’s more than a project, we actually went into business together. We are three grandmothers who are giving the sixties a run for their money. As professional artists—both fine and commercial—we are trying to make our community an arts focused one and decided the best way to do that is to go in business as a gallery/studio cooperative venture. You can find out more about us at ParkeGreenGalleries on Facebook or our blog which we’re starting on Blogspot.”

“I think two heads is always better than one, provided you share equally the benefits! In my case, the collaboration has always brought something positive, even if it’s just a boost of motivation!”

“I created a project involving 3 other businesses, this was partly to have an excuse to launch something and felt having affiliates would be wise. In hindsight my lesson learnt is to thoroughly research and get to know the partners values and ability to market. I ended up coaching two of them to be more confident and proactive in selling our programme, which defeated the objective really and their insecurities did sometimes create problems. This was feedback to me and a valuable lesson learned but overall I would work with women again, the one that worked was very passionate and able to network really well, we shared values and supported each other perfectly.”

“My friend and I collaborate on projects all the time. We scratch each other’s backs and everyone always benefits.”

“As an editor I write and edit press releases, bios and the like. I collaborate with a female graphic designer to complete projects. As an editor of manuscripts, I also collaborate with book cover designers who are female.”

In Their Own Words

“I own Houston Outcall Massage, and last month the female owner of Colour Nail Bar brought me in on a corporate pamper party. We provided chair massages and they provided mani and pedicure on-site services and it was a win-win for this collaboration. Charlotte Neal, CEO.”

“I thrive on collaboration and joint ventures. I find, when it is going to work, we fairly quickly come to a mutually beneficial agreement of what is equitable in all areas. If it is not going to work, I find it is rough in the beginning and feels disconnected. I go with this in my decision making. If it starts out rough it most certainly is not a matched collaboration and will most likely decline. Joyce”

“My decisions about collaborations are based on business expertise and good fit. I’ve mostly worked with men in my field but have also collaborated with women. When collaborating, gender is rarely a consideration.”

“Five small PR firms collaborated to bid on a major grocery chain and won!”

“The strength of shared vision, and the uplifting vortex of positivity that happens when women come together without ego or competition to better themselves and the world is immeasurable. We all go through rough days in our businesses... feel self-doubt, start to make decisions that feel wrong, or even worse, self-sabotage. To have a community of women to assist, uplift, and add brilliance to a project, while keeping it moving forward even through the ups and downs is amazing. I recently collaborated with 3 other women, and everything I felt incompetent with in the creation and launch of our e-course was handled expertly by one of the women in the group. We all struggled the MOST with feeling like it was too easy, and we weren’t doing enough to even out the workload. That’s the BEST “struggle” ever!! Working together was always inspiring, even when we disagreed about something. Everyone was open to using the BEST idea for the project in every situation... and all 4 of us got to shine with our most joyful and fun selves, because we got to do ONLY the work that felt fun and happy for us. The rest was taken care of! Every project should be this amazingly easy!”

In Their Own Words

“The right project and right partner can be very fruitful!”

“My experience is that when you collaborate with someone and you help the other person/ project to grow, you end up learning and growing as much or more than the other party. I have also found that collaboration tends to grow exponentially: my last collaborative project with another woman- owned business ended up creating two new projects of collaboration. One has already succeeded and we are still working on the second one and having a great time while doing so.
View full response of this respondent
Marketing the project is a big factor. In my case, we didn’t have the participation to continue our collaboration.”

“You have to have the right people involved. As long as everyone does their assignments and the client is happy it is a win-win for all.
View full response of this respondent
Over a year ago, I started a business with a fellow female colleague with great results! Additionally, thru our local women’s professional groups, we have met other women with varied expertise who have helped us grow our business. By collaborating, and pooling our professional strengths, we are able to assist each other as a community of shared knowledge.”

“I met a number of new connections and preparing to collaborate with one of my new connections on a large project.”

“My experience has and usually is one of too many LARGE personalities. I prefer to work with men. Their no nonsense attitude and gentler personalities are more attractive and becoming to engage with. I have experienced SOME women whom are genuine and not over zealous, it has not been the norm for me. And in the business I am in - the RUDENESS factor from many women is often brushed off as assertive. Sorry - RUDE IS RUDE!”

“I worked with a marketing expert and had an awesome experience.”

In Their Own Words

“Vet out any potential partner to ensure they bring value they say they have to the table. View full response of this respondent
I’ve not had a collaborative experience. I have participated in vendor fairs and sadly I feel that most women expect you to support but not equally supportive. It’s feels selfish.
View full response of this respondent
I thin that collaborating gives us an added benefit that goes beyond networking.
View full response of this respondent
I worked on a book collaboration with 21 other women. The communication was very to the point and structured. I enjoyed it because we knew exactly what was required of us and the information was transparent and precise. I appreciate it very much. I have developed great friendships and business relationships as a result of this experience. I am looking for more opportunities, now so if you hear of anything or if I can be of service to your project; please let me know. Thank you!

Frenetta Tate, President, EmpowerMe365
Speakerl Authorl Certified Coach I Event View Strategy Consultant”

“Communication is the key and mutual respect once it’s earned.”

“I am committed to helping women entrepreneurs grow their businesses through collaboration and strategic partnerships. I find that too many women are very transactional focused and looking for immediate return on investment versus building relationships which can lead to referral partnerships. I also find that people do not follow through with their commitments which is very frustrating.”