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Can her joint venture partnership model work as well in the U.S., as it did in her home country? Related topics: Newsletter Promo Summary and excerpts from recent books, special offers, and more from the Harvard Business Press Review. Hal Rosenbluth must have considered and rejected a dozen ways to reorganize Rosenbluth International, the third-largest travel company in the world. But it wasn't until he stood in a field at his ranch in North Dakota near the company's operations center that the inspiration hit. With the flop. I was standing in a pile of cow shit, just about to call it a day, said Rosenbluth, 44, whose roots in Philadelphia are clear in his Rocky Balboa accent and meandering speech style, when a close friend of mine walked out into the field and we started talking. A friend was a farmer, and the more he talked about family farm activities, the more it sounded like a solution to Rosenbluth's business problem. What happened was things were going to hit the fan back in Philadelphia. Rosenbluth needed a new design for his high-flying, fast-growing organizations. Since joining his great-grandfather's modest travel business in 1974, he has turned him into one of the country's leading agencies. In 1984, he received a contract to provide all Of DuPont travel services, and in the process saved his client \$150 million in travel and entertainment expenses. In 1992, he wrote Customer Comes Second, and Other Secrets of Exceptional Service, arguing that Rosenbluth's unconventional management style - focusing on employee needs and creating a truly humane workplace - would lead to services to customers. Customers. The book attracted a national following to the company: Tom Peters took notice, the business press began writing about Rosenbluth, and the company flourished. But by 1993, Rosenbluth could see the problems ahead; the tourism business, in his opinion, is about to change. In fact, airlines were on the verge of restricting the commissions of travel agents. Companies like Rosenbluth need to renegotiate their deals with their customers in a hurry. They will no longer pay large companies with huge travel budgets to be able to handle their business. Instead, they must convince these companies to pay them for value-added services. In a company memo in January of that year, Rosenbluth told his people: This price-sensitive market of the 1990s is a dramatic shift from the market of the 1980s - an era of explosive growth and Rosenbluth's success. We need to meet the needs of our current and future customers more consistently, more efficiently and much faster. The decision, it turned out, was not in the nine-story building of Rosenbluth International headquarters in downtown Philadelphia. It was that cow pie spotted field in rural North Dakota. What I'm starting to see, says Rosenbluth, is that the family farm is the most efficient type of unit I've ever come across, because everything on the farm has to be fully functional and multifaceted. And what I'm looking for is an organizational design that can inform that change. Before dismissing the family farm as an endangered species, more suited to cope with the business climate of the last century than with the following, consider Rosenbluth's argument. Agriculture - like tourism services and a host of other businesses - is all about merging cutting-edge technology and down-to-earth people. The requirements are the same: to survive on razor-thin profits, to react instantly to unpredictable changes, to carefully monitor resources and to come up with new ways of selling a product that, at first glance, seems indistinguishable from the other guy's product. With this in mind, Rosenbluth has divided his company into more than 100 business units, each operating as a farm serving specific regions and customers. Corporate headquarters have become the equivalent of an agricultural city where shops like human resources and accounting dole out what farmers need. At Rosenbluth Farm, decision-making and training will be localized. In the face of impending difficult times, it was an attempt to recreate the spirit of Rosenbluth's young, supersonic environment; if the whole company was too big to be a farm, at least every unit could be one. The transition was not easy. Despite a specific promise to the Customer comes second - We don't subject our people to layoffs, cuts or staff cuts - Rosenbluth dropped 217 staff when the crisis in 1994. But But The reorganization softened the blow, and today Rosenbluth returned to top form. The company, which raised a modest \$20 million in 1978, Rosenbluth topped \$2.5 billion in sales in 1996. Its 3,500 employees are distributed in more than 1,000 locations in 41 countries, and write nearly 4 million tickets each year. In addition to DuPont, wal-Mart, Merck, Intel and Oracle are customers. So many businesses get into trouble because times are good, says human resources development director Cecily Carel, looking back at a travel agency-like farm maneuver that seemed strangely at odds with the company's success at the time. But without a radical reorganization, Carel says, we would never have been able to make this global growth. We lost him. Farm Life Part 1: It's not Norman Rockwell's simple mention of one basic value overshadowed everyone else: treat your employees well, and everyone else will fall in love with their places. In fact, Rosenbluth didn't even use the condescending term of an employee - everyone in the company is an associate; manager is called leader. But with all the emphasis on soft stuff, Hal Rosenbluth has consistently been willing to put the farm on a much tougher and dicier competitive element: advanced information technology. After all, when you're up against giants like American Express and Carlsonit Wagon Travel - or the new self-service features offered when booking an online trip - cutting-edge information technology makes all the difference. Family Farm goes high-techThe travel business today is all about spending: showing your customers that you can help them control them by doing their best to internally control yours. The key is efficiency, and Rosenbluth's relentless focus on technology creates efficiency in all kinds of ways, large and small. In general, technology is a link that connects customers, booking agents, sales representatives and top management. It's a lesson Rosenbluth learned during another visit to North Dakota, when his farmer buddy was running behind schedule. When you need something, go to your neighbor, Rosenbluth says. It doesn't cost anything. It's just that you better escape when your neighbor calls for help. The equivalent of Rosenbluth is a global distribution network that connects each booking agent in their 100-plus business units to the AS400 mini-mainframes in Philadelphia that bulge with specific to the customer. This means that any Rosenbluth agent anywhere in the world can on the global travel data of each customer - or offer services to any customer. All of this is integrated with two Rosenbluth branded programs. One is called Res-Monitor, the tourist equivalent of a low cost search engine. Related to the fare information coming from all major airlines, it finds the lowest prices at the time of customer request and then continues to look for new, better deals until departure. The second, more elastic system, known as DACODA, takes into account a wide range of other criteria that will help the customer choose not only the lowest fare, but also the best trip. He finds these options based on customer data, from individual company compliance rules to special transactions that a given customer may have with specific carriers. The system also quantifies a number of hard-to-measure qualitative factors - seat height, flight time or time spent making ground connections. Formula software makes these calculations, says Diana Peters, longtime head of Rosenbluth, now a consultant to the company. It's totally unique in our industry. By building this network, Rosenbluth reduced the physical location of his agents. Back in the 1980s, it was the first agency to use its technology to create a massive booking nerve center where agents at one point handled travel management for customers across the country. This withheld costs; but as the company grew, Rosenbluth realized that such Intelligent Centers could be scattered across the country. Now the company has large phone banks in areas where labor costs are low and work ethic is high: North Dakota, Delaware, and Allentown, Pennsylvania. Because of these lower costs, the customer can save 30% to 40% per ticket by ordering through IntelliCenter, sales estimates vice president Joe Terrion.The Rosenbluth network not only links all of its agents to each other, it also controls them from the network operations center on the fifth floor of Philadelphia headquarters. Staffed by several employees who divide their attention between seven computers and a grid of nine video-contact monitors, this screen-lit electronic tracking center provides a window on all farms. With a few clicks, employees can check any Rosenbluth booking center: how many calls come, how long customers wait on hold, how long each call lasts. The center also acts as an early warning system for unforeseen events that can cause a spike in call volume in one area or even disrupt travel. CNN or The Weather Channel are highlighted from the main screen, and information about airport conditions and major events in cities around the world down on other screens. If one farm gets hit with a flood of calls - or actual flooding - calls are easily transmitted Centre. During the Blizzards '96, for example, about 21,000 calls to East Coast Rosenbluth outlets were easily redirected in this way. This technology also leads to increased microunrun efficiency, resulting in a small but critical increase in productivity. For example, Rosenbluth noticed that his agents had to print the same words over and over during the day, or even one call, as they were exploring the fare options for customers. Thus, the company has developed Custom-Res, a software platform with built-in hints that requires only yes or no click. It is also built into repetitive customer information, identifying the specific guidelines of each travel company, so that agents do not waste time creating options outside of acceptable guidelines. Result: The number of keystrokes has been reduced by 75%. Less keystrokes means less waiting time for a customer - and better performance for Rosenbluth.By closely monitor the volume of a call at each booking center, the company can state each accurately. This management of the value of the customer benefits indirectly, of course, but Rosenbluth also parlays its effectiveness into more direct customer benefits. The company measures the percentage of calls in 20 seconds, the average response rate, the maximum amount of time spent on hold, and the percentage of abandoned calls. For each category, the company has specific operating standards, and if the numbers come out of impact, something changes - staff are added or deducted, calls are shifted. All this leads to tight cost control- both hard and soft costs. Rosenbluth prides itself on using technology to offer its customers the lowest tariffs. But the company also acknowledges that travel costs go far beyond the ticket price. In a large company with a large number of travelers, each trip can affect future travel decisions - if you collect and analyze data. For example, by autopsing travel models, companies can discover new ways to fine-tune travel guidelines. Rosenbluth's back-office VISION software generates detailed reports for customers and saves administrative time for them by automatically filling out expense reports at the end of each trip. The key to Rosenbluth's growth is a combination of technology and marketing. And to make sure that these two elements are integrated, Rosenbluth put one person in charge of both: Dean Sivey, the former technical director of Duracell, who took over Rosenbluth's IT department in 1995, is now also responsible for marketing. Most of the things we do in IT are driven by what we need to do in terms of marketing, he says. It's easier for one person to decide that most sensible. One of Sivil's first tasks was to come up with a set of products to link the company's technology parts to the Package. If you're a company who's out there in this own travel management in a big way, says Sivey, you want to deal with a company that knows you need a product without a booking agent, an integrated expense management system, and a comprehensive reporting tool. Seaveley points to Wal-Mart as a good example. The giant retailer has worked with Rosenbluth to create electronic local area network (LAN) reservation systems available from every traveler's desktop or laptop in the company. The non-agent system, E-Res, allows Wal-Mart's 7,000 frequent travelers to book their own air, hotel and car booking simply by calling the program, entering your name, travel dates, time, and home and city destinations. Then, using Trip Planner, The Rosenbluth Reservation System software, they receive a grid of flight options, all selected in accordance with Wal-Mart's internal Travel policies, organized according to the price. A few simple clicks, and reservations are made. For companies that don't want the complexity of the LAN system, Sivey offers both a web version and a simpler online system. The best thing to do is develop a dial-up product, he says. You can just throw it on the user's desktop. You don't have to get involved in the technology department. It's not elegant. But it's much more realistic in terms of installing it, getting groundswell people using it, and then when it spreads to the whole company, you move on to the LAN environment. This kind of down-to-earth thinking shows why it just makes sense to have a marketing person and technology person to be the same person. Farm Life Part 2: It's not Dorothea Langay's first depiction of life on a farm is that of Norman Rockwell's illustration, the second is that of Dorothea Lange Photography: a railway thin, hollow-eyed man standing grimly in front of a shack - a reminder of the unforgiving demands of the land and the weather. So if agricultural life is that difficult - as difficult as the climate in many businesses - is a company like Rosenbluth start grinding everything in the bottom line, stop coddling employees, and get average? It's out of the question, Rosenbluth says. Even as his company tries to position itself for an uncertain market, there is at least as much focus on what he wants to stay on as on what he is willing to become. After all, says Rosenbluth, I believe that our only sustainable competitive advantage is the partners and the environment in which we operate. But how to preserve this culture? How do you make sure that The desperate-looking Dorothea Lange photo is not hidden beneath this touching norman Rockwell painting? Answer: First of all, remember that this is a family farm. The staff of your farm Good ideal Our company is built on something that is foreign to most companies, Rosenbluth says. Rosenbluth, a company built on friendship. When I was in college, I was taught not to work with friends because you can't get the productivity out of them, you can't make tough decisions. But, he argues, if your colleagues become your friends, you'll never let each other in. You can do anything. This is Rosenbluth's final answer (and the theme, he says, of his next book): It's just when things get tough that you want to work with friends. In fact, if your people are nothing less than during the recession, you are in trouble. In other words, the company still puts its employees first. Rosenbluth's two-day orientation towards new employees is already a legend. The first day of the climax in the high tea party - on white underwear, led by a high-ranking employee of the company. It's a good reception, but it's also something else, notes longtime Rosenbluth executive Frank Hoffman, who led the company's training and development for eight years. The main goal is to have them experience the service that is 2 higher, he says. The product means nothing - in this case it's water and tea bags - but the way you do it is everything. On the second day, new employees break into small groups and create parodies based on good and bad service experience. The facilitator encourages them to discuss how to fix what is wrong and improve what is right. Says Hoffman: How can we bring that up a notch? It requires a special thought, personal contact. That's what we're trying to take home. It's almost a sacred program. Of course, promising a cohesive culture within two days of a controlled session is easy. Follow-up is what matters. All Rosenbluth offices, for example, will leave the company's meeting schedule and let any employee be present. Want to know what Rosenbluth's top leader's day is? Any employee can sign up for the shadow of anyone in the top management during the day. A month after signing in Rosenbluth's communications department in 1994, Janine Shoemaker made the date of Hal Rosenbluth's shadow. When he suddenly had to make a trip to Mexico City that day, Shoemaker went along. I was just sitting there with my mouth open and I thought it was too cool," she says. We acquire another travel agency, so I did a role for myself communicating that when I was there. I was able to contribute. Rosenbluth's leaders are used to the question of whether such things are distracting. Ralph Smith, vice president of associate and supplier relations, says a happy workplace is a key psycho-benefit that attracts good people and keeps them. He also backed away from troubled staff. There's a lot of peer pressure here, smith says. It's less structured, more flexible. People have a problem with that. I mean, I had a problem with it at first. Bobby Rose, Philadelphia Manager center, oversees 60 booking agents who work on the ground floor of the company's headquarters. A former agent herself, she spends her day circulating among current agents, scanning their faces for signs of trouble. If no one needs help, she jokes, they send her back to her office. Sometimes it will work with phones. Rose points to an example of a recent band leader who didn't work. The problem was not the knowledge or skills of the manager; it was her reluctance to develop partners as required by culture. After a while she realized that she could not go down this path. And she left the company. I know it was because of team pressure, discussion, and even training, Rose said. It doesn't make sense to her. Training benefits the worker, first, the farm second. As Rosenbluth changed the way it worked, it also changed the way its employees learned. Despite having a strong department of learning and development, as well as a culture that encouraged - if not required - the acquisition of new skills, the old system placed a burden on leaders. No leader can know all the different options that exist within the company and are expected to do this kind of career counseling, argues Hoffman, a former training and development chief who now holds the

position of Director of Human Capital. They can't. And let's face it, they'll look at what they're responsible for, so they're focused more on how you can help their particular function. In the old system people didn't learn enough - and, more importantly, they don't get enough back from the company. What we really felt was, No one cares more about your career than you do. So why not say, here are all the things we will make available to you as a company. We have an HR where you can get career counseling, we have a surveillance program where you can spend time in any other department and see what happens. But it's up to you to continue these things, Hoffman says. Scavenger learning is a rosenbluth term for this style of learning, and change meant two things. First, as the company split into more compact business units, each of them appointed a training leader who had a report to the head of the division. These training leaders can spend 25% to 100% of their time on training and unit development. There are about 110 of these connections now, backed by the extensive training program the company has already developed, and the skills of 24 members of the LPC team at Philadelphia headquarters. Secondly, more importantly, the company has shifted the authority to develop learning experience on its partners. Each of them has an individual plan developed in conjunction with its business leader and with human resources, identifying both long-term goals and short-term short-term - as with the class or spending time in another department. Developing skills in inter-learning benefits the company. But the real benefit to employees, argues Vice President Ralph Smith, who believes this is another psycho-benefit. This job security offered by IBM 25 years ago no longer exists, even at IBM. In today's job market, safety comes only in the form of skills. All you can get out of the situation is experience, knowledge and learning, says Smith. We are actually competing for the same talent as IBMs and Motorolas at the moment. We don't have a profit like some of these companies. So part of what we have is fun in the workplace, access to travel, and perks. And by the way, 10 years at IBM? You get that in two years here in terms of experience and what you can participate in. The beauty of agriculture - and that's what happened to a lot of business today - is that you can't fake agriculture, says Hal Rosenbluth. I love it. I just love him. Either crops grow or they don't. Our customers are harvests. They either grow or they don't. It's a performance ethic that manifests itself in deeply ingrained Rosenbluth, a go-it-alone, dogged independence. The private company remains uninterested in shareholder verification, which will follow even the most lucrative public offering. Earlier in the decade, Rosenbluth recognized the potential for global growth and began partnering with agencies around the world. It didn't work. Each agency had its sweetheart deals with travel service providers, Rosenbluth says, and sometimes these deals weren't the best thing for their company's customers. Now disconnected from most of this relationship, Rosenbluth has been buying small agencies around the world and forming each in the form of Rosenbluth. Rosenbluth's ultimate go-it-alone move was interrupted by a partnership with Microsoft to develop agent-free travel software. The benefits of the deal were obvious - but Rosenbluth was already far ahead in developing his own product, and Microsoft, which went on to partner with American Express, loomed as a potentially dominant partner. Says Dean Sivley: Microsoft doesn't travel, so they get used to the idea of working with American Express. And they don't do service like we do. We have grown as a service company that is currently applying technology. Also, I think people still like the idea that when something goes wrong, you can talk to a person. It's the part we do better than anyone else. As for Hal Rosenbluth, at the moment he seems to have the contents running on the farm, preparing for a future industry that is completely up in the air. I get most excited when I see the full confused, he says. And the tourism industry is confused. No one could that goin' on. In other words, it's the kind of environment in which you have to look where you step. Rob Walker (rwalker@hearst.com), senior editor of SmartMoney, has written for The New York, The New Yorker, Texas Monthly and other publications. Farm Team Spirit Captain Future Farmers of AmericaRosenbluth Rodeo Rodeo Rodeo integrated farming system pdf. integrated farming system model. integrated farming system upsc. integrated farming system definition. integrated farming system ppt. integrated farming system layout. integrated farming system the hindu. integrated farming system book pdf

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