Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside
Developing successful partnerships

More than 100 years ago, the definition of partnership was similar to what it is today—two people socially acquainted forming an alliance for business purposes. The partnership is established on a level of comfort knowing that two heads are often better than one. Sometimes it lasts a long time, but usually it doesn’t. In the case of Fred Nelson and Oscar Westerberg, it worked. One was “Mr. Inside” with administrative preferences, and the other was “Mr. Outside,” with sales and marketing expertise.

My grandfather was Mr. Outside. He drummed up business and was more entrepreneurial than his partner who preferred inside operations. When my father took the helm of Nelson Westerberg, he, too, was Mr. Outside. His partner, Harry Burg, Fred Nelson’s son-in-law, was Mr. Inside. Once we determined I would enter the family business, it became clear I would also be Mr. Outside.

Our needs for Nelson Westerberg were to develop new lines of business in addition to local moving. We developed national account business using a pack-and-haul concept that was new to the industry at that time. We hired a cadre of professional van operators. We invested in a fleet. And, yet, we kept our thumbprint on household goods relocation—our core service.

Along the way, we formed strong partnerships—the most important of which was with Atlas Van Lines in 1960. This partnership, still thriving today, is what defines the words—integrity, trust, quality and respect. And there are many long-standing clients with whom we’ve marked decades of partnership, also.

Interpersonal relationships are the true crux of any partnership, and this is the foundation on which we base client partnerships. When you can rely on Mr. Inside to ensure the company is synchronized, operating at capacity in the

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Defining partnership on the international arena is vastly different than what happens on the domestic front. Nelson Westerberg International works with a multitude of independent trading agents, brokers and suppliers who execute globally on behalf of Nelson Westerberg.

“We work in every foreign country with companies ranging from pillar to post and diversity of ownership,” said Ken Curry, president and COO of the 30-year-old Nelson Westerberg International. “Partnerships we can’t regularly cultivate in person are more difficult. Using trusted partners’ opinions in a region is absolutely essential when it comes to global relocation.”

That’s why Ken and his team rely on FIDI, the international network of members, to cultivate relationships. With its C-TPAT certification, Nelson Westerberg International brings additional efficiencies to its clients during an international relocation.

Ken suggests that international relocation is similar to a marriage. Listening is the first skill put into action followed by an understanding of the needs. Once a level of trust is developed, the professional relationship is enhanced to exceed customer satisfaction.

Credibility, professionalism and personal relationships drive international relocations. Post move, everyone relies on the transferee to truly provide real-time information about execution, service, professionalism and the overall experience, but it’s the up front work that is most critical.

“No matter what language you speak, everyone’s personal possessions are dear, and it is our job to ensure we respect that regardless of how we communicate face to face,” said Ken. “When we find a trading agent who gets high marks from the transferring family, you bet we’re going to come back for another go.”

Ken’s words of wisdom for transferees include the need to be flexible and embrace the entire relocation process. People should be ready to explore new culture with a vengeance and keep a mindset for adventure.

Partnerships globally

Nelson Westerberg’s partnership milestones

Winning new business demands hard work. Retaining that business for half a decade (or two or three or four), requires much more. Partnerships that stand the test of time are built on solid foundations. They’ve grown through the delivery of superior quality and service. They’re sustained by strong relationships and consistent and compelling value.

These clients have reached Anniversary milestones in 2007, and we’re pleased to count them among our national account partners, and we’re proud that we continue to earn their business.
Partnerships from the inside out

To operate a successful company, internal relationships are equally as important as the external partnerships we cultivate. Defined, it is any relationship between leadership, managers, teams or employees with a common purpose to achieve business objectives and service customer needs.

These partnerships contribute to stability within our organization, reinforcing the availability of resources, reducing sensitivities and contributing to an overall high-quality customer experience. From the outside looking in, this effort is invisible; however, from the inside out, everyone at Nelson Westerberg works hard to ensure a seamless and unified position to clients.

What do we do that contributes to the successfullness of these internal partnerships?

• **Employee empowerment:** Employees are asked for their input, given choices in how they work and are also given authority to make critical customer service decisions.
• **Hands-on management:** No move is ever the same twice. Employees can seek direct help from account managers, general managers or senior management to assist in resolving specific issues. By engaging management in this way, those who need to know stay abreast of critical issues. At the same time, it allows the company to implement effective continuous improvement processes and procedures.
• **Tools and training:** Employees are empowered with knowledge through training and retraining in areas that include but are not limited to product knowledge, operational procedures, customer service and problem resolution.
• **Measurement:** Through customer satisfaction ratings, employee feedback, monitoring of employee turnover/tenure (customer service reps average six years with the company; owner-operators are with the company on average nine years; management stays more than 15 years with the corporation) and employee recruitment, we have a strong pulse on the ingredients that make our company a success.

The solid internal partnerships we develop directly contribute to top quality service delivered to customers. And those quality services translate into long-term partnerships that would not exist without the internal partners to carry out Nelson Westerberg’s corporate mission each and every day.

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Professional van operators critical

N elson Westerberg works diligently to develop solid relationships with professional van operators who deliver an exceptional experience to customers.

“We rely on our professional van operators to set a professional tone with the relocating family and carry it from origin to destination,” said Steve Westerberg, executive vice president of Nelson Westerberg. “There is no partnership more critical, and it is our responsibility to cultivate it from the get go.”

Nelson Westerberg seeks more than just someone driving a tractor and trailer. Nelson Westerberg’s directors of operations communicate the company’s expectations so everyone understands how quality service must be delivered. As the company’s frontline ambassadors, professional van operators need to take ownership and establish good rapport with everyone.

“Our standards and expectations are high, and we require our van operators to be accountable and responsible,” said Steve. “Our front-line teams must have personality, attention to detail, strategic thinking, management skills, respect and integrity. Without these attributes, success is difficult to achieve in this profession.”

Steve personally makes it his responsibility to ensure that the Nelson Westerberg driving team is informed on a regular basis about corporate news. Drivers in turn provide critical feedback about what’s happening on the front lines with transferring families. It is this level of mutual accountability that makes our driver partnerships successful for the long-term.
Driving solo is best guarantee

Moving others comes naturally to the Olsen family; just ask Jeff, his brother, Scott, or their father, Bob. Bob owned a small agency in the ’70s in Wisconsin when Jeff was a teenager. Growing up, Jeff knew he would follow his father’s footsteps in the relocation industry.

Jeff, 46, has been a dedicated professional van operator for Nelson Westerberg’s Illinois office since 1992. His “tour of duty” takes him within a 1,000-mile radius of Chicago—from Colorado and Texas to the Gulf States and up to the Carolinas and New Jersey.

Recently, Jeff purchased a new tractor, a 2007 Kenworth T600, to complement his over-sized trailer, which gets 7.5 miles/gallon (better than before). The 2007 tractors are built with new federal emissions guidelines and non-polluting filter systems that burn cleaner, low-sulfur fuel.

He is the sole driver because he prefers the responsibility knowing it’s up to him to guarantee a successful move. Jeff’s trailer is called “Big Bertha” because it is a three-axel, double-drop-frame trailer that handles up to 4600 cubic feet, a massively huge load.

Apples to oranges

Jeff says the industry has come a long way to advance efficiency. Gas mileage is better; communication is heads and shoulders better than before; containers are made to size so less air is shipped and trucks in general are equipped with more bells and whistles to withstand the hazards of the road. Electronic payment systems on toll roads and updated scales on interstates are big improvements.

“It’s rather like comparing apples to oranges when you think about what used to be with what is,” said Jeff. “In years past, many things were less expensive like labor, fuel, insurance and the cost of living on the road. Today, we measure efficiency in convenience, time, communication and comfort.”

Alleviating stress

When asked about what has changed in the industry since he began working, Jeff says “the furniture!” In particular, television sets are not the big and bulky units they used to be. Plasma screens are bigger, but lighter and easier to pack and carry. Particle board furniture is much more common in homes these days and requires special attention.

As for customers, Jeff says customers have not changed. When a family relocates, it causes stress, regardless. It’s his job, and that of his crew, to help diminish the stress level for a family on the move.

“Typically, the woman in the family is our primary point person,” said Jeff, “and we work hard to assure her that we will be thoughtful, sensitive and respectful of her belongings when we pack, load, haul and unload. I take many digital photos of a room before it’s dismantled and pieces of furniture before we take them apart. That way, we can be sure at destination we’re setting up the room and furniture as similarly as we can.”

Jeff uses the same approach each time he embarks on a move:

- Be relaxed and confident that he and his crew know the ropes.
- Engage the customer in conversation that establishes credibility.
- Listen to the customer and allow her to talk about antique dishes or prized artwork and how they should be packed.
- Be presentable every day in proper attire.
- Explain what is expected and what is planned.
- Remain respectful and courteous throughout the move.
- Anticipate the need for flexibility until the doors close at destination.
- Address conflict or issues directly and immediately.

It’s about partnerships

As for his profession, Jeff says it’s about the partnerships he’s been able to develop. One in particular with Nelson Westerberg has given him the freedom to work independently and still rely on the company when he needs to.

Nelson Westerberg knows they’ve got a good thing going with Jeff Olsen. “When a professional van operator gets the customer satisfaction ratings Jeff does, he’s a keeper,” said Ed Pionke, Nelson Westerberg president. “Our industry is challenged to recruit and retain excellent drivers, and we’re proud to have Jeff on our roster.”

How does Jeff find the right support in this day and age of diminished help? Jeff relies on good old-fashioned networking, and his family is the first place he starts. The key is to plan ahead as much as possible because good help is always at a premium. What he tries to do, and often succeeds, is to have the same crew on the front- and back-ends. This helps everyone’s comfort level at destination, especially the family walking into a new home.

“I don’t take partnerships lightly,” said Jeff. “In this type of customer-service business, it is critical that I trust my crew and the shipper trusts all of us. Time and experience are how we know we’re a team for the long term.”
Client expertise defines partnership

Since the 1990s when Susan Kubiesa, vice president of HR operations at Zurich North America, worked at Baxter and then at Motorola, she consistently sought corporate relocation companies with proven expertise and execution on an international scale. Nelson Westerberg met the parameters she required and successfully bid during RFP processes to become her relocation partner. For years, Nelson Westerberg’s Illinois agency proved its worth, and now Nelson Westerberg International is in the fold working its magic for Zurich transferees, as well.

What Susan seeks in her external partners (she prefers this term over “vendor” or “supplier”) is a full comprehension of how corporate relocation works, along with integrity, industry reputation, stability and an ability to meet the future with positive change.

“When I communicate upfront our suppliers are partners with Zurich it sends a message that we’re working as a team to mutually ensure our customer, the transferee, is well taken care of,” said Susan. “The expectation is immediate that we’re all in this together and we better be synchronized to deliver the utmost in quality service at every touch point in the corporation.”

Nelson Westerberg works hard to establish synergies with its clients, and for several decades it has been successful working with Susan as she herself relocates to new employment opportunities.

“I’ve known Susan for more than 20 years, and she is one of the most knowledgeable human resource executives who truly understand the inner workings of our industry,” said Tom Philbin, general manager of Nelson Westerberg’s Illinois agency. “What that requires of us is an even higher level of quality to achieve and exceed service and measurement goals.”

The key to household goods relocation, according to Susan, is finding the right partnerships, discussing and agreeing on expectations and then maintaining and adjusting them as necessary to continue the partnership. Customer expectation is higher; price is a huge component; all companies are interested in a profitable bottom line; and it is increasingly challenging to identify talent to work in this industry.

“We want to comb the industry to identify the relocation partner with the best talent including customer service reps, heads of agencies, owner-operators and international brokers. That’s what we get with Nelson Westerberg,” said Susan.

One telling factor about a business partner is how they address conflict. Susan measures success by how well problems are approached and resolved, and she says Nelson Westerberg does a fantastic job in this regard.

“There’s no other way but to be immediately direct when a challenging situation is identified,” said Jim Kanik, vice president with Nelson Westerberg International. “When we sense a situation may lead to crisis, everyone is clicking to nip it before that happens. At the outset, we’re primed and ready to take action.”

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black and is staffed with qualified and good people, only then can Mr. Outside do justice. Exemplary operations inside make for exemplary relationships outside.

Regardless of who we’re dealing with, there is one set of partners who are Nelson Westerberg’s most critical—the management team and staff who make this company work. Throughout this newsletter, you’ll hear from the executives behind the departments who lend their special expertise to developing partnerships with quality focus.

Ed Pionke, the company’s Mr. Inside, tells about our philosophy for creating better operations; Steve Westerberg talks highly about cultivating professional van operators; and, Ken Curry speaks to how the company establishes good global rapport with agents and brokers abroad.

Partnership takes place at every avenue, around any boardroom table and certainly with every mode of communication. Think about it some time—trust, integrity, quality and respect—is there really anything else?

Global moves
It’s more about reputation and execution, and that’s where Nelson Westerberg International’s expertise plays out. Over the years, it has compiled an encyclopedic collection of knowledge to help abate the challenges of international relocation.

Nelson Westerberg International can select any global agent or broker with a proven track record for execution and quality service.

While international relocation is not high-volume, Zurich typically relocates higher-level executives. Recently, Nelson Westerberg International moved Zurich’s new CEO from Switzerland to the Chicago metro region.

Communication is the basis of any partnership, and Susan and Tom sit down quarterly to review domestic performance metrics against a service level agreement. In addition, Tom is in close touch with Susan’s three staff in Zurich North America’s Global Mobility department on a regular basis.

“There’s no better way to ensure we’re tracking than to build relationships the old-fashioned way—by pure talk,” said Tom. One of the things Susan looks to her relocation partner for is best-in-class research.

What are other companies doing in this arena, and should she be doing it, too?

Is there some technological advancement that could save us efficiencies for the long term?

How can we mutually identify ways to save cost in this time of increasing expense across the board?

The only individual who can truly measure the success of the partnership is the transferee, and Susan relies on them for their reaction after each move.

“There’s one question on the post-move survey we watch intently,” said Susan, “and that is ‘would you use Nelson Westerberg again?’ When they answer ‘yes,’ in spite of a claim or mishap during the move, we know we have a partner who is exceeding expectation. My phone does not ring about claims issues with Nelson Westerberg.”

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Teamwork is partnership

Around the company in locations across the country, Nelson Westerberg adheres to a philosophy of teamwork and partnership with a personal stamp of approval from the respective general manager who direct the day-to-day operations:

As John Westerberg indicates in his cover story, every successful partnership has a Mr. Inside and a Mr. Outside. Wayne Dennis, general manager of Nelson Westerberg in Atlanta defines partnership by internal customers and external customers. When you add customers into a melting pot, partnership simply means “everyone.”

Wayne’s solution to working with everyone as a partner is based on respect, communication and quality service. He applies the Golden Rule to the direction of the Georgia operation, and he expects everyone else to follow his lead.

Wayne brings five tips to the table to ensure the nurturing of teams. He encourages everyone to be outwardly mobile when interacting with customers—both internal and external. He offers team building challenges to help with productivity. For external customers, he likes to make a surprise visit with a fruit basket and have an impromptu meeting. While there, he hand delivers important information direct to their door. To develop trust, Wayne advises consistency and being consistently available.

In Texas, Bob Akers, general manager of Nelson Westerberg in Dallas, defines partnerships as teams with different talents and responsibilities. This team has a common goal—to win at whatever it plays.

To cultivate his team, Bob becomes a source of information, an advocate for external customers and is supportive of his internal team. The foundation for Bob’s success in cultivating partnerships in and around his agency are to be accessible in whatever time zone it is; frequently communicate; be considerate of existing and past relationships with customers; do the right and honorable thing; and to empower people to make decisions that will positively influence customer service.

Tom Philbin is general manager of Nelson Westerberg’s Illinois office, a post he has held for nine years. He defines partnership simply as “people working together to meet and exceed expectations.” A true partnership is further defined by a common understanding of goals based on industry knowledge. Tom prefers to establish dialog and build relationships over time to be successful. One way to do that is to break down barriers in a partnership one day at a time. He defines his job as providing tools and setting expectations with anyone he interacts with from his staff and peers to clients and drivers. With knowledge, everyone is empowered to exceed expectation.

Lou Reo, general manager at Nelson Westerberg’s New Jersey agency, suggests every partnership begins internally. To build a strong team on the inside, there needs to be mutual respect. Lou uses this formula to interact with customers and build long-term relationships.

Along the way, problems will occur. But, it’s long-term performance that is the secret to success. Lou and his team strive to be accountable and available at a consistently high level. Customers respect that service mentality. And, it must be working with Lou; he’s been using this equation for successful partnership for more than 30 years.

The competition to win this coveted award is fierce. That being said, the following drivers, each traveling thousands of miles and serving hundreds of customers, were awarded cold hard cash and trophy recognition for their outstanding performance in customer service and low claims ratings:

Edward Gebhart
Ernest has been with Nelson Westerberg for 35 years and it’s his third time winning this award in the last 8 years.

Ernest Peña
Ernest has been with Nelson Westerberg for 11 years and it’s his first year winning this award.

Dexter Golden
Dexter has been with Nelson Westerberg for 16 years and it’s his fourth time winning this award.

John Lutwyche
John has been with Nelson Westerberg for 14 years and it’s his first year winning this award.

Maury Golden
Maury has been with Nelson Westerberg for 18 years and it’s his second time winning this award.
About Nelson Westerberg

Founded in 1904, Nelson Westerberg is a veteran-owned, financially strong premier corporate relocation company that serves the domestic and international moving and storage needs of Fortune 1000 and blue-chip companies, organizations and individual families. We make over 12,000 moves happen around the globe annually with a stable best-in-class workforce of over 250 people, over 400 tractor/trailer/trucks, and a commitment to continuous improvement processes and standards.