

Running a business is hard. Keeping your small business a success requires diligence, persistence and determination. Many owners find themselves working long hours to keep their businesses afloat, enduring fluctuations in profit and sales. This can be made all the more difficult when working with a partner that is not contributing satisfactorily to the business. How you deal with a business partner who is not pulling his weight can mean the difference between success and failure in your partnership.

The first step in deciding to confront your business partner about his shortcomings is to determine whether this is a temporary or permanent problem. Sometimes a temporary issue in the partner's personal or professional life may cause him not to perform at his full potential. An unexpected car failure, a flooded basement or a sick child may temporarily distract your partner and affect the amount of work he produces. In cases of temporary lapses in productivity, the best course of action is to be patient with your partner and give him time to improve the situation.

When the partner's lack of productivity is not tied to a temporary issue and is indeed a permanent, ongoing occurrence, you may need to confront him about not pulling his weight. Choose a neutral place and time to discuss the issue at hand. Schedule a meeting to address the issue. Map out what you will address in advance, and try to plan for any objections that your partner may raise. Set up your meeting in a non-threatening manner. Using a round table signals that this meeting will be about working together. Avoid sitting behind a desk when you confront your partner, as this signals a confrontational situation that may intimidate him or cause him to be defensive.

Address the specific ways that your partner is not pulling his weight. Don't say, "you're not pulling your weight." Instead, say "When you were late opening the store, some of our customers left and we lost sales." When confronting your partner, demonstrate how his lack of effort is affecting the entire organization. Don't say "I had to do the bookkeeping again when you didn't do it." Try saying "when I have to complete the bookkeeping, it takes away from my sales duties and we lose money." Avoid blaming your partner (even if it's his fault!) as this will just cause him to be angry and defensive. Finally, offer solutions. Ask if there is anything you can do to make it easier for him to fulfill his obligations. Propose several solutions and try to come to the best one. Allow him to offer solutions as well. By confronting your business partner about not pulling his weight in a constructive way, you will make your business more productive and motivate your partner to work harder.