A relationship map provides a clear overview of the actors already involved in the enterprise and the relationship types. It also helps to identify actors that are not yet involved with the enterprise, but may be relevant in the future.

Cooperating with different actors is one of the most important factors in the success of an enterprise. Relationship mapping creates understanding of the relationships and roles in a network and awareness of potentially beneficial new actors. This enables you to manage cooperation to gain access to skills, experience and financial resources.
Create an overview of the actors and relationships in your network by following the steps below.

**STEP 1: IDENTIFY RELATIONS**
Identify all actors from the four groups below who are or could become relevant for the achievement of the objectives of your enterprise.

**Customer:** Individuals and entities buying your product or services

**Community:** Neighbours, employees, community leaders, women’s organisations, CBOs, NGOs…

**Partner:** Suppliers, distributors, competitors…

**Institutions:** Local, national government, government agencies…

To identify actors, ask:

- Which actors actively and directly influence your enterprise? (e.g. key partner organizations, employees, local distributors, opinion leaders in the local community)
- Which actors are directly affected by your entrepreneurial partnership, both positively and/or negatively? (e.g. customers, competitors)
- Which other actors outside the internal cooperation system possess relevant key resources? (e.g. public administration, NGOs, private companies)
- Which could become essential in the future?

**STEP 2: ANALYSE RELATIONSHIPS**
Your enterprise forms the center of the map with the relevant actors arranged in the four groups around it. The closer an actor is to the middle, the stronger the relationship with your enterprise. Determine the status and quality of each relationship depending on the duration and your and the actor's interests and needs. Use the guidelines below to help fill in the relationship types and characteristics.
Relationship types

**Close relationship:** A relationship which makes an important contribution to your enterprise. Often these are relationships in which mutual commitment and trust has been built up over time. For example: local building contractors who make occasional adjustments and repairs to workspaces.

**Weak or informal relationships:** A relationship which involves a low level of mutual commitment or activity. Often these are relationships based on locality or other factors unrelated to your core business. For example: neighboring enterprises with whom you share the locality and its infrastructure.

**Institutional or contractual cooperation:** A relationship which is legally established and documented. Often these are suppliers, sub-contractors, or authorities. For example: suppliers of raw materials or financial services, or cooperation with state and local inspectors.

Relationship characteristics

**Direction of hierarchical relationship:** A relationship which includes an authority relation (the arrow points to the one lower in the hierarchy). For example: government agencies which your enterprise is subordinate to, or sub-contractors or others subordinate to your enterprise.

**Conflict or tension in relationship:** A relationship which results in or creates disagreement, tension or conflict. The conflict symbol (N) can be added to any relationship line in the diagram.

**Interrupted or damaged relationship:** A relationship which no longer or only partially functions due to disagreement, tension or conflict. The disruption symbol (||) can be added to any relationship line in the diagram.
You can begin to manage relationships in a coherent, strategic way: to create, develop, mend or strengthen relationships to benefit your enterprise.
RELATIONSHIP MAPPING

guidelines for consultants

Version 1.0

WHEN?

Relationship maps can be helpful at any stage of the enterprise’s development. We recommend drawing them up right at the beginning. Relationship maps are needed at the very latest when the enterprise is considering scaling up its activities.
To ensure actionable results, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. **ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN ADVANCE**
   To draw up a relationship map, a good knowledge of external actors is required. Check whether this knowledge is present. **It may be necessary to do some research on relevant actors beforehand.**

2. **UPDATE THE MAP REGULARLY**
   Relationships between different actors and their roles within the enterprise change over time. The enterprise should be aware of the particular point in time at which it mapped the relationships.

3. **INVOLVE AS MANY INTERNAL ACTORS AS POSSIBLE**
   A relationship map reflects the view of its creators. It is therefore important to involve as many internal actors in the drafting process as possible. **Make an overview and contact them in advance to make sure no-one is overlooked.**

4. **DEVELOP A COMMON VISION OF ROLES OF EXTERNAL ACTORS**
   As you work with the enterprise to understand the different roles of actors within its network, check whether everyone involved views them in the same way. **If not, work to ensure that a common view is developed.**

5. **IDENTIFY INFORMATION GAPS AND PROBLEMS**
   Keep an inventory of actual or potential problems, such as information gaps or important actors who are not involved. **Use these as input for a network management strategy.**

6. **IDENTIFY IMPORTANT ACTORS WHO ARE NOT YET INVOLVED**
   Through including actors who are not yet part of its internal network, but relevant for the enterprise (now or in the future), relationship mapping helps the enterprise to identify possible cooperation partners. **It shows where to direct coordination, communication and cooperation efforts.**
TIME
Day workshop.
For each of the four actor groups you can take between 30 minutes up till 90 minutes, with a break to refer to the cards.

MATERIALS
Large print, drawing or slide of the worksheet; pin board or whiteboard; workshop materials (markers, cards, lots of Post-its, etc.)
Keep a set of facilitator cards with the six guidelines and check whether all points have been covered as you go through the process.

TEAM
You’ll need at least one facilitator and one or more people representing all main parts of the client enterprise. Optional: an external stakeholder from project organisation.
For larger groups: have people in smaller groups fill in each actor category and present the outcomes.

DOCUMENTATION
Work with Post-its so you can add and remove elements easily.
FURTHER READING

The Relationship Roadmap: The Professional Guide for Strategically Building & Maintaining your Business Contacts (The ConnXN Factor)

Partners: [List of logos]

With support of: [List of logos]
RELATIONSHIP MAPPING

Get a clear overview of the actors already involved in the enterprise and the relationship types, as well as potential future actors.

Name of Enterprise:  
Description:  

CUSTOMERS

PARTNERS

YOUR ENTERPRISE

COMMUNITY

INSTITUTIONS

RELATIONSHIP TYPES:
- Close relationship
- Weak or informal relationship
- Institutional or contractual formal cooperation

RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS:
- Direction of dominant relationship
- Conflict or tension in relationship
- Interrupted or damaged relationships