

We're Stronger Together

How Collaboration and Community
Building Can Boost Your Bottom Line



Rebecca Gill

Professional Experience

- 25+ years of sales experience
- 20+ years of digital marketing experience
- 15 years of owning and running small businesses
- 5 years of owning alpacas at Cotton Creek Farms

What Really Matters to Me

- Wife
- Mother of two humans
- Human momma to 40+ alpacas



Relationships and collaboration allow us to learn from each other, solve problems, and grow revenue. That means we can advance both our individual businesses and the alpaca industry.

What does collaboration mean?

- Awareness – We join together so we can have a shared awareness of known issues
- Problem Solving – We drive forward together to solve problems
- Participation – We participate and share responsibilities so we can have better outcomes
- Mediation – We negotiate and find a middle point
- Reciprocity – We share and we expect sharing in return
- Reflection – We think, we consider alternatives, and we discuss steps forward
- Engagement – We proactively engage, exchange ideas, and create solutions

2014 CaboPress

CaboPress is a community event built entirely around collaboration. It planted a seed and grew amazing roots for both me and my digital marketing business.



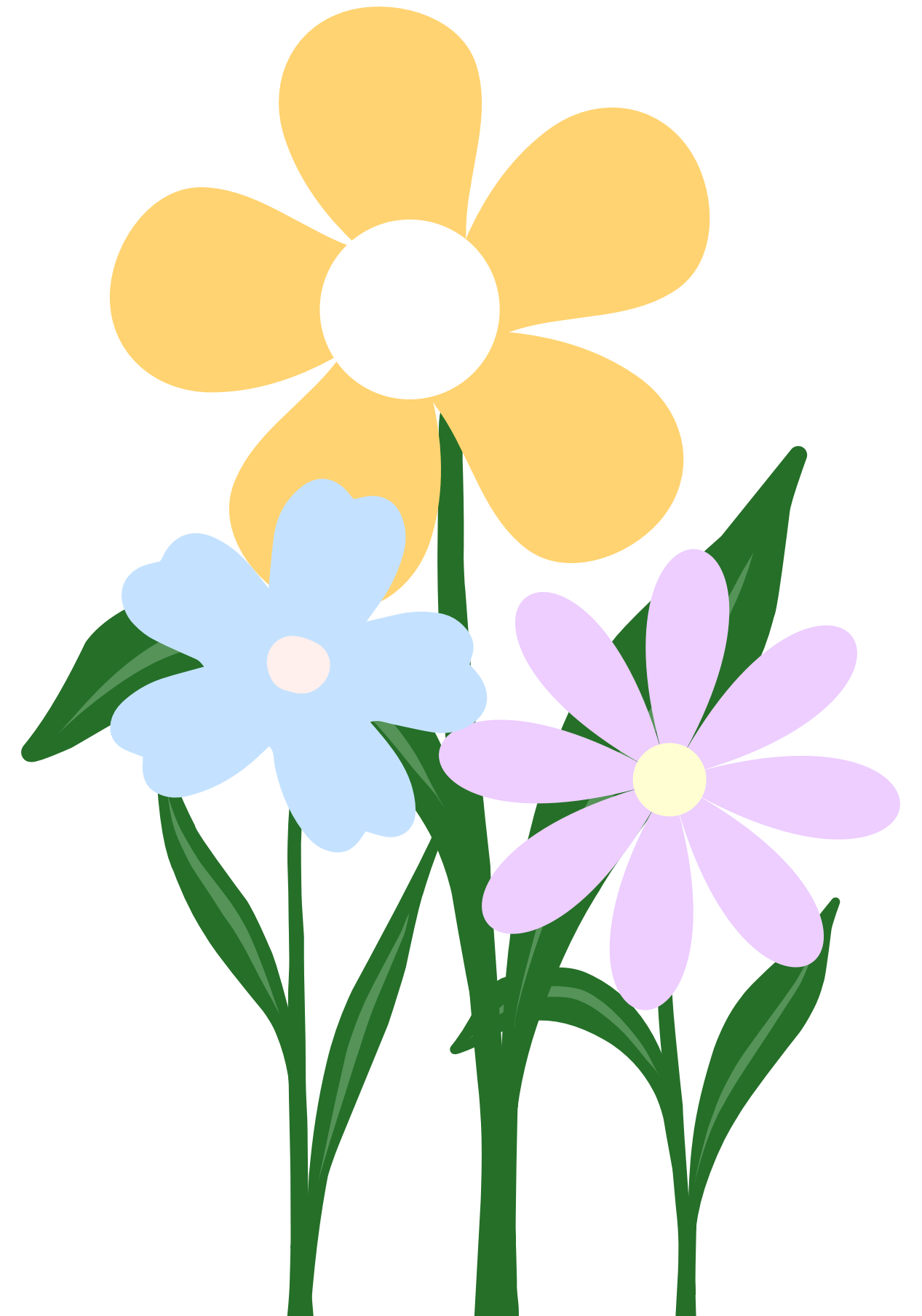
Why was this such a pivotable movement for me?

My small business was limited in growth.
I was feeling very alone.
I didn't know how to ask for help.
I learned we could go farther together.



**It became clear I wasn't
alone. I finally had people
I could rely on and
collaborate with.**

Community is powerful when you allow it to
take hold and grow roots.



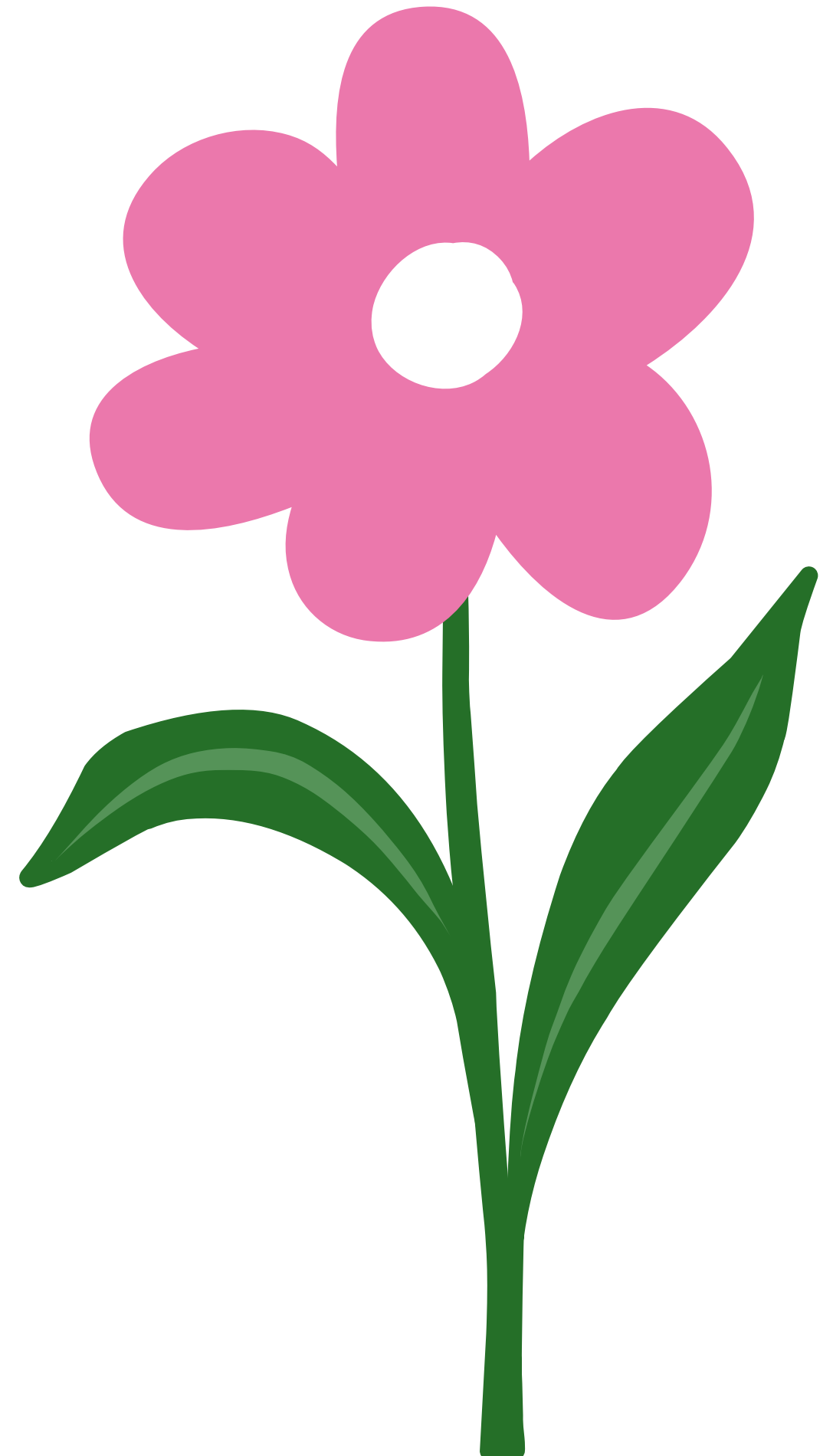
Small changes can produce big results when you let it

- 1 Bigger clients:** I no longer feared working with the enterprise. I started accepting and executing projects I would have previously declined.
- 2 Complex projects:** I could embrace advanced technology and coding challenges. I knew I had a partner willing to jump in and help should I need it.
- 3 Larger reach:** Through co-marketing with a partner, I could now reach a massive audience and I was positioned as a world-wide SEO expert.
- 4 Referrals were plentiful:** I had more referrals than I could accept or manage, which allowed me to pick and choose the clients.

**Here are my
lessons learned on
how to go far together...**

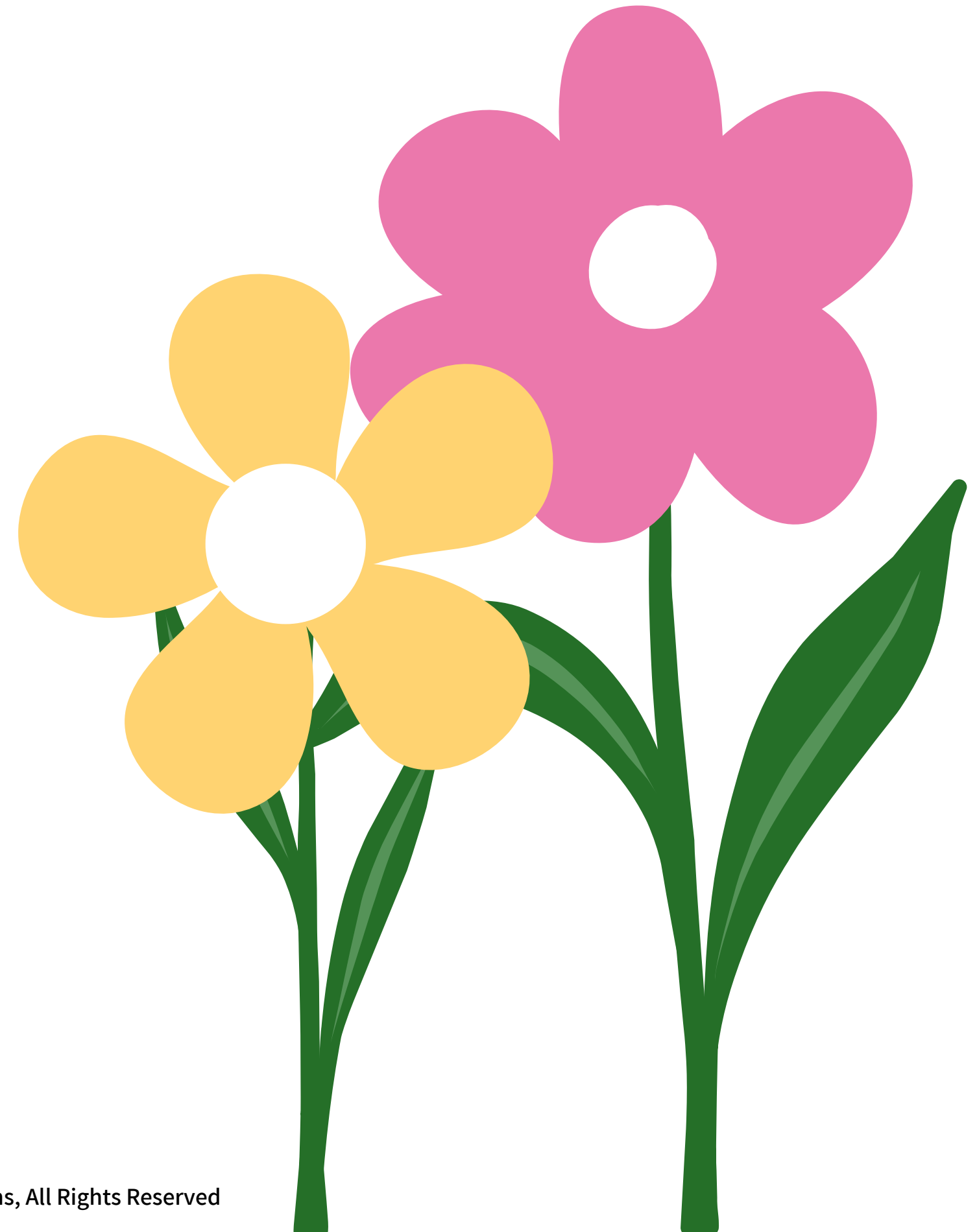
Push out a lot of good and good will come back

Always think about what you can do for others and
don't just think about what they can do for you.



Always prioritize people over profits

Collaboration is only sustainable if you
focus on the collective and everyone wins.



Know your value and acknowledge your gifts

Be realistic about your strengths and weaknesses. And know a strength that may be insignificant to you, might be a monumental gift to someone else.



Align yourself with like-minded people

It's really hard to partner with someone who has a different belief system or a moral compass that points in a completely different direction.



**If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.**



Research possible partners so you really know if they are a fit

Know the person, their background, and their why. Ask questions and listen.

The more you know about their background and what motivates them, the more you'll know if they are a fit for you and your business.

You'll also be better equipped to manage and grow the relationship.



Allow time to build and nurture relationships

Most people (or companies) won't want to immediately jump into a relationship. Collaboration is usually created by small acts of kindness that build upon each other.



Remember the ideal partnership will adapt over time

Every business evolves and changes as it matures. Your relationships won't stay stagnant. They should adapt as your business shifts and pivots.



Know that sometimes the right answer is to walk away

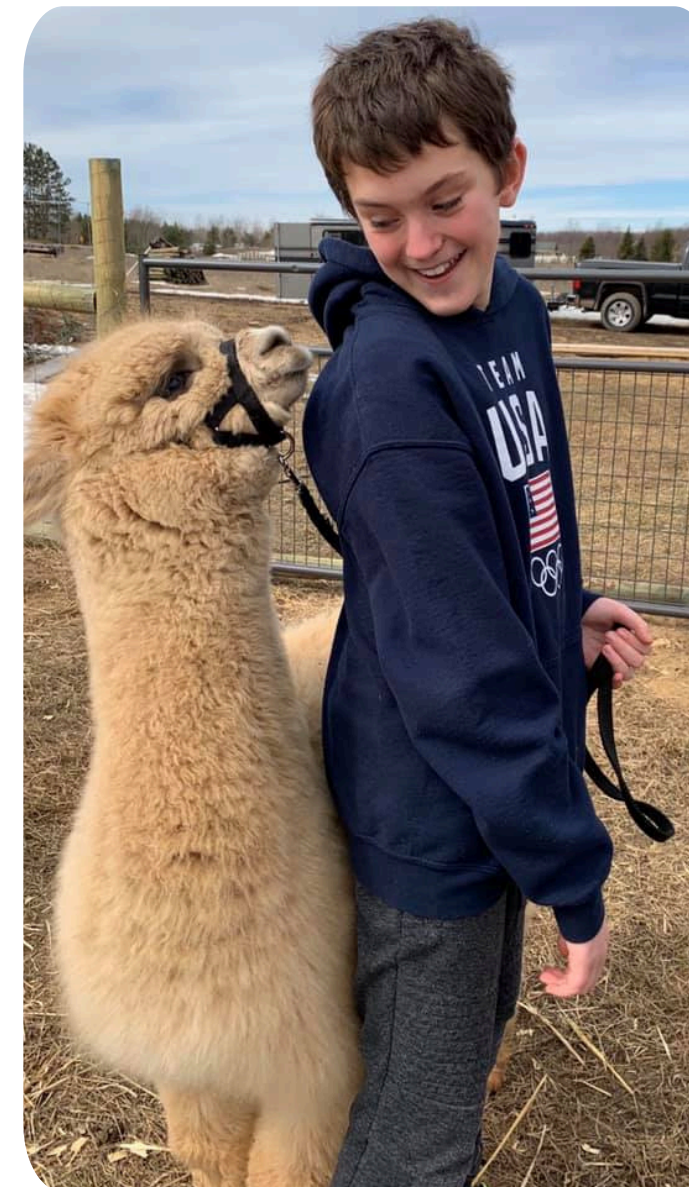
Sometimes things are not a fit and they simply won't work. It is best to recognize this as early as possible, walk away, and forge a new path.



**But how does this concept
apply to the alpaca
industry and your farm?**

2019 Our family fell in love with alpacas

We quickly went all in with alpacas and the industry. And without realizing it, we started to build relationships and collaborate. We are blessed to be where we are today because of the people who helped us along the way.



Now let's talk about you!

What does your business struggle with?

- Setting personal and business goals
- Business planning and strategy
- Operations
- Technology
- Herd evaluations
- Breeding decisions
- Herd health
- Marketing and promotion
- Pricing methods
- Alpaca sales
- Fiber processing
- Product creation
- Product sales
- Financing or cash flow

Who can an alpaca farm collaborate with? More people than you might expect!

- Alpaca farms and ranches
- AOA
- Local AOA affiliates
- Product manufacturers
- Wholesalers
- Fiber mills
- Spinners
- Vets
- Shearers
- Mentors
- Customers
- Businesses (resorts and wineries)
- Local government
- Local associations
- Local tourism boards
- Local B&Bs, resorts, and campgrounds
- 4-H and FFA
- Tour groups and their associations
- Bloggers
- Magazine editors
- Local or national media
- Freelance writers
- Social media influencers (travel and knitters)
- Photographers

How have we collaborated at our farm?

- Fiber collections and sorts
- Small batch product creation
- Commercial level product creation
- Product consignments
- Alpaca sales
- Alpaca breedings
- Speaking engagements
- Color genotype consulting
- Digital marketing consulting
- Fiber show submissions
- Tourism videos
- Social media influencer visits
- Rack card distribution
- Local media appearances
- Local magazine articles
- National magazine articles
- Photographer shoots
- 4-H programs
- Local resort appearances
- Food bank donations

Some of our most impactful activities

- Fiber collection and cash payment for farms who cannot use their fiber
- Commercial run alpaca products to drive US made goods and high margins
- Wholesale offering of commercial run products for other farms
- Consignment of products for other farms
- Consignment of alpacas for other farms
- Referrals of alpaca sales to other farms
- Material swap for finished goods
- Education opportunities for other farms
- Trading goods and services
- Offering free education/consulting for data
- Generally serving as a connector of people to do good

Some tips to get you started

- 1 Don't let imposter syndrome get in the way. Be open about your weaknesses, but know you have way more to offer than you realize.
- 2 Collaboration opportunities can come from the oddest places. Keep and open mine so you don't miss it when it arrives.
- 3 Many times your first instinct will be to immediately say no because you have time constraints or poor past experiences. Fight that urge.
- 4 A lot of collaboration takes place without any money changing hands. Don't discount the value of something that doesn't have monetary gain.
- 5 Think first about how you can help the other party achieve their goals. If you focus on your gain first, the collaboration will quickly fall apart.

Some tips to keep you sane

- 1 Don't compete against yourself. I once lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue trying to do good. I learned the hard way.
- 2 Don't spread yourself too thin. Sometimes you have to say no because you are physically or mentally overloaded.
- 3 If that little voice in you keeps nagging at you, walk away. My inner voice is louder than my husband's, so we let my voice tell us when to say yes and no.
- 4 Don't rush the process. I'm in it for the long game, while my husband is a fixer and immediately wants to jump in and help. I force us to slow down.

Even the well established ranches have areas where collaboration can help

- You're at an alpaca show and don't have enough handlers. Grab a kid to help. They don't need or even want to be paid. This isn't a transaction for them. It is an experience. They want your knowledge, and they want to be able to handle champion alpacas.
- The media calls and wants to put you on camera. The majority of small businesses immediately say no because it is outside of their comfort zone. Remember alpacas are loved because they are quirky, so it's okay for you to be quirky too.
- You've decided having a farm store isn't for you. But what do you do with all this inventory? Find a farm that is opening a store and have them sell your goods on consignment. It gets it out of your way and you'll get recurring revenue.

Even the well established ranches have areas where collaboration can help

- You have years of fiber you're not using and you're tired of storing it, but you don't have enough fiber or cash flow to make anything. Pool it with other farms. Together you'll have enough fiber and cash flow for economical product runs.
- It's been a "boy year" and you now have an abundance of male alpacas that don't meet your breeding program requirements. How do you move them and make money? Partner with 4-H and FAA programs to get those young males out of your barn and into the hands of future farmers. You'll make far more per male than you would by selling them to a fiber farm or as a traditional pet.
- A local photographer needs a location for a photoshoot. Let them in and grab some free high-quality photos of your farm and alpacas.

**Push out good and good
will come back to you**

