

# FROM PITCHING TO PROOF: A SMARTER WAY TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS



**JOE WATERS**

# JOE WATERS, SELFISH GIVING

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- ➔ Founder, Selfishgiving.com and newsletter on partnerships
- ➔ Cause marketing and sponsorship expert
- ➔ Author, *Cause Marketing for Dummies* and *Fundraising for Businesses*
- ➔ Based in Newton, Massachusetts, USA



# Partnership Proof System



Audience-Centric Fundraising



Case Studies

AI



Partnership Newsletter



CPE 2027?

**PEOPLE THINK  
PARTNERSHIPS ARE  
ABOUT PITCHING**



# PEOPLE THINK PARTNERSHIPS ARE ABOUT PITCHING

Better Alignment

Better Decks

Better Ideas

Better Proposals

More Emotion



A photograph of two men in a meeting. The man on the right is wearing a dark suit and has his arms crossed, looking towards the man on the left. The man on the left is wearing a light blue shirt and is partially visible in profile. They are sitting at a dark wooden table with a laptop, a glass of water, and some papers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**PARTNERSHIP  
CONVERSATIONS STALL  
BECAUSE OF RISK**

A photograph of two men in a meeting. One man is on the left, seen from the back, wearing a light blue shirt. The other man is on the right, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt, with his arms crossed and a serious expression. They are sitting at a dark wooden table with a laptop, a glass of water, and some papers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# PARTNERSHIP CONVERSATIONS STALL BECAUSE OF **RISK**

Execution risk

Brand risk

Audience risk

Financial risk

**PROOF  
LOWERS  
RISK**



# PROOF LOWERS RISK

You've Done This Before  
It Worked

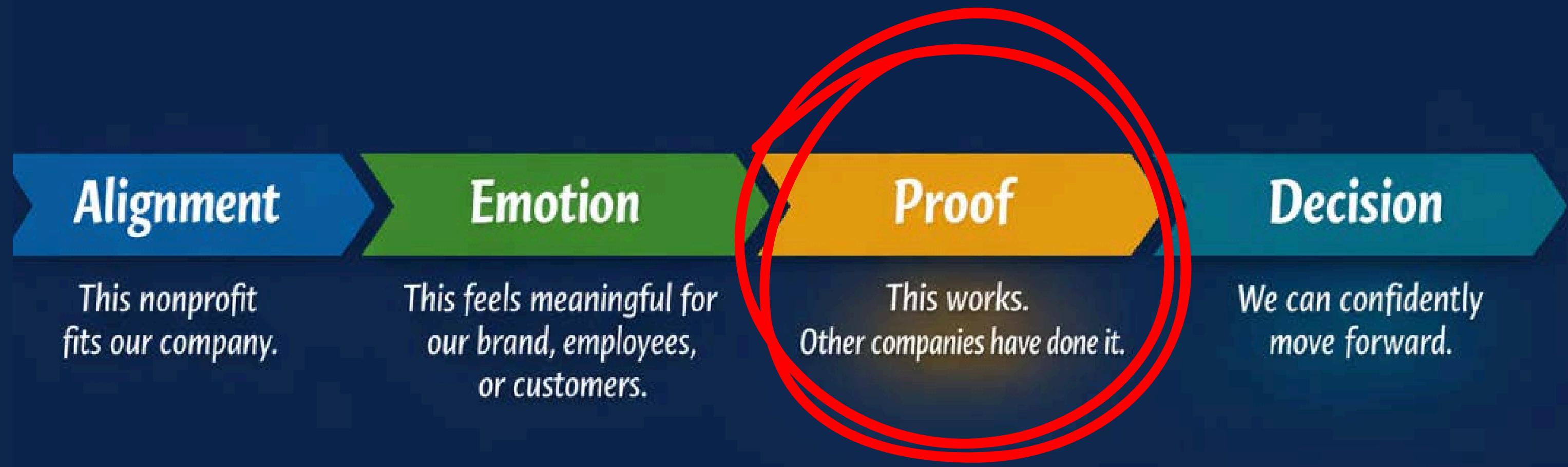
You're a Safe Bet

You Can Do It Again

And Here's How



# How Partnerships Actually Get Approved



*The Partnership Proof System turns alignment into proof—and proof into momentum.*

**Builder → Accelerator → Flywheel**

The logo for Feeding America features the words "FEEDING" and "AMERICA" stacked vertically. The letter "I" in "FEEDING" is replaced by a stylized wheat stalk. The text is set against a white circular background with a dashed border.

**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

The logo for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital features a red silhouette of a child sitting on a red arc. Below the silhouette, the text "St. Jude Children's Research Hospital" is written in a serif font, followed by the tagline "Finding cures. Saving children." in a smaller, red sans-serif font.

**St. Jude Children's  
Research Hospital**  
Finding cures. Saving children.

The logo for the Wounded Warrior Project features a black silhouette of a soldier carrying a wounded comrade on his back. Below the silhouette, the words "WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**WOUNDED WARRIOR  
PROJECT**

The logo for Children's Miracle Network features a yellow outline of a lightbulb with a red base. Below the lightbulb, the words "Children's Miracle Network" are written in a red, sans-serif font.

**Children's  
Miracle Network**

# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM

**Create Proof**

Build a partnership  
worth documenting

**Publish Proof**

Turn success  
into credibility

**Leverage Proof**

Attract and close  
the next partner

*Which fuels the next partnership—and the next case study.*

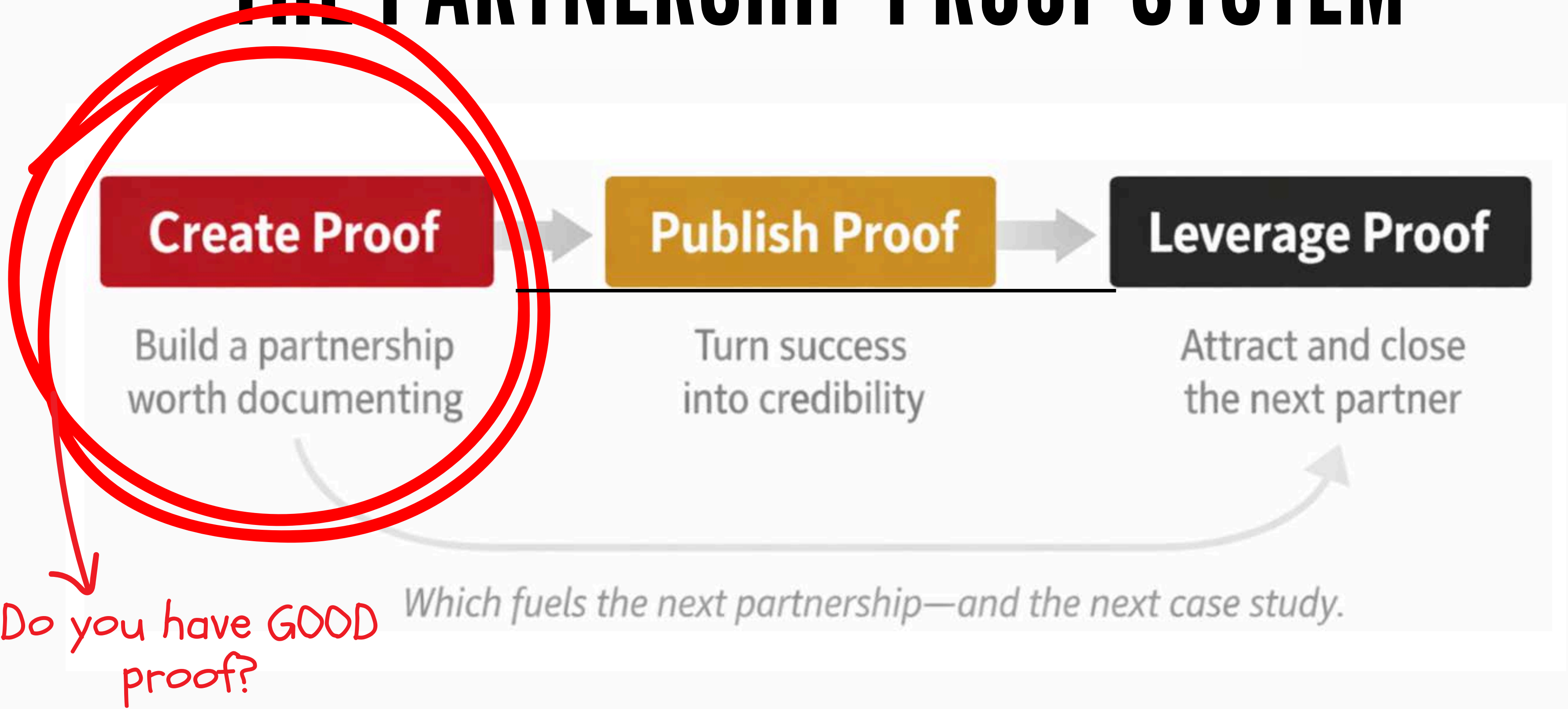


# Sponsorship/Cause Marketing

- Workplace Giving
- Employee Volunteering
- Product Partnerships
- Corporate Grants



# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



# WHAT COUNTS AS **GOOD** PROOF?





*Chuck &  
Cheese*™



AMERICAN  
SOCIETY for  
DEAF  
CHILDREN



# WHAT COUNTS AS PROOF?



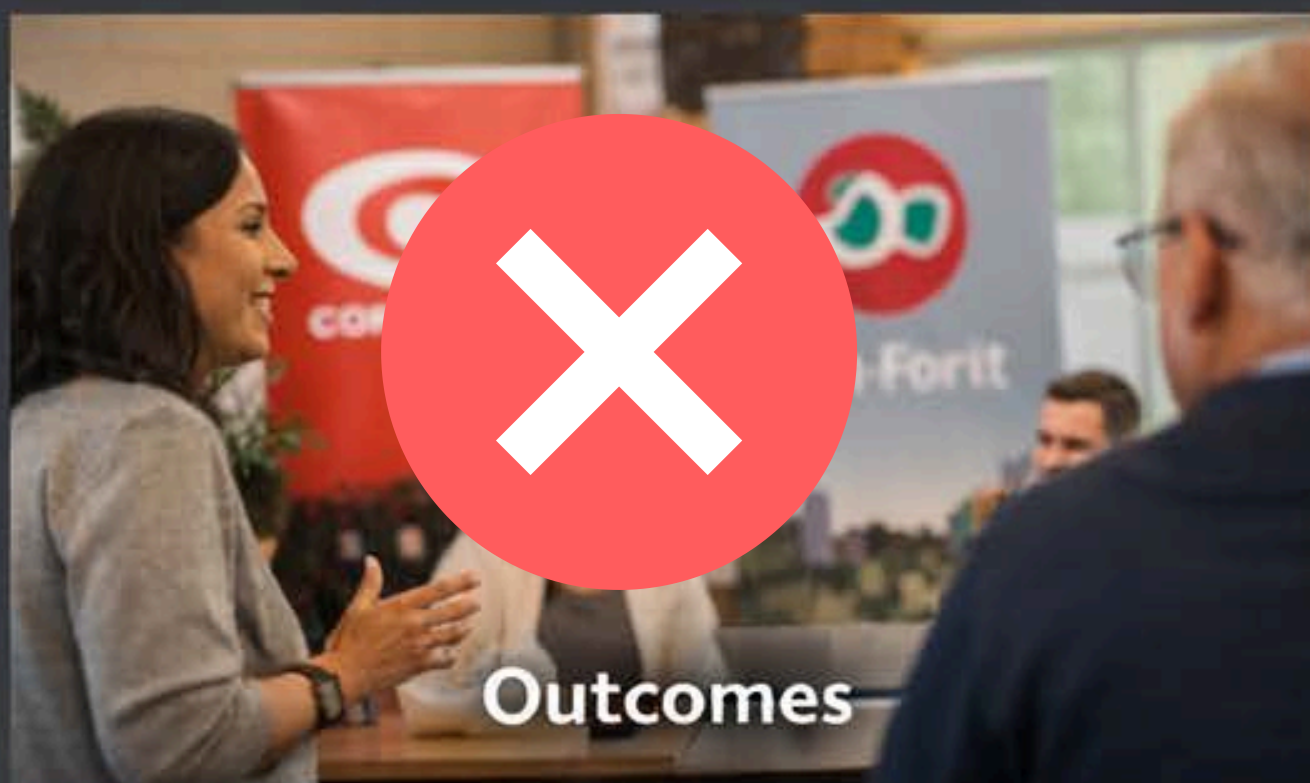
# S&T Bank



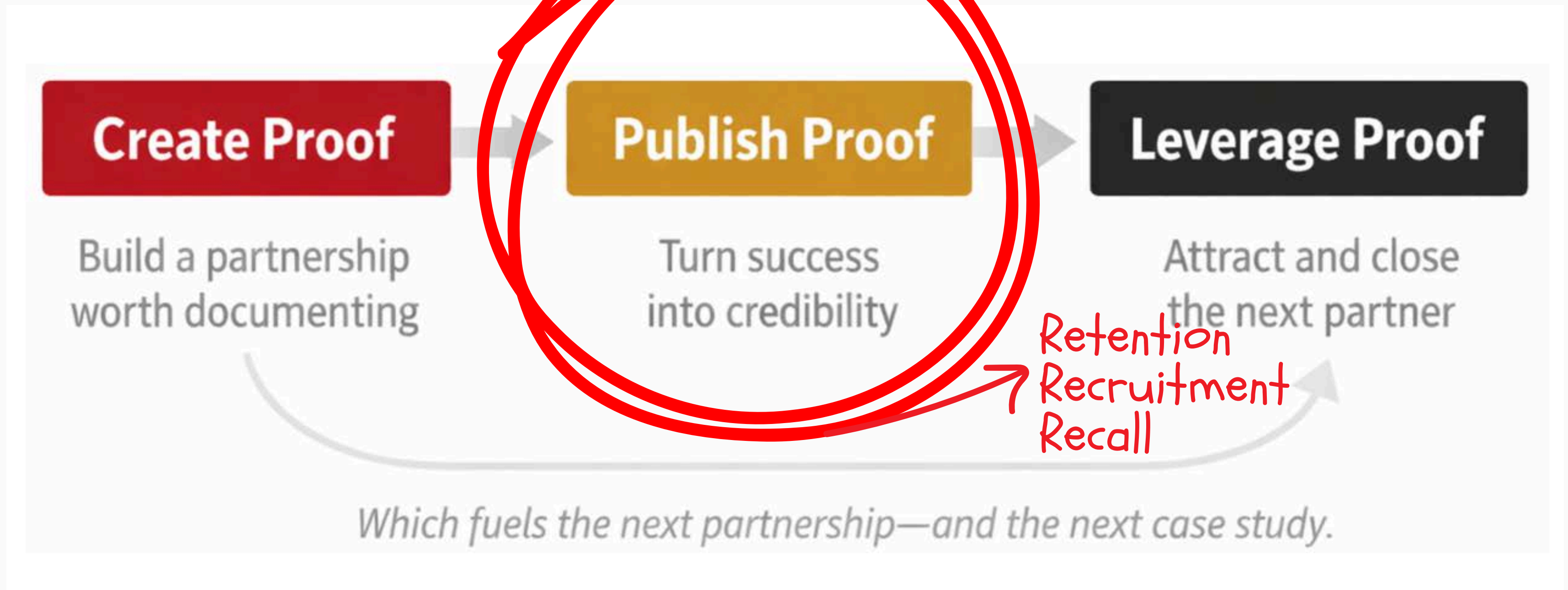
The Children's Hospital  
of Philadelphia®



# WHAT COUNTS AS PROOF?



# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM





**INTERVIEW**

**FINALIZE**

**OTTER.AI**

**DRAFT**

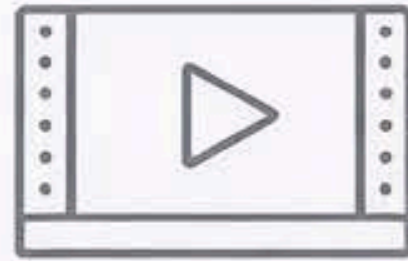
**CHATGPT**



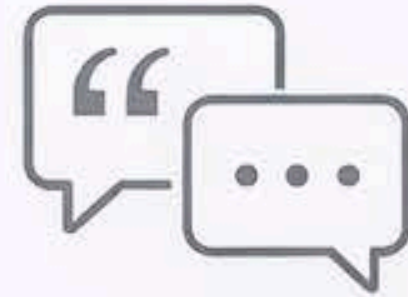
# OTHER FORMS OF OUTWARD PROOF



Written case studies



Video case studies



Testimonials



Survey results



Referrals

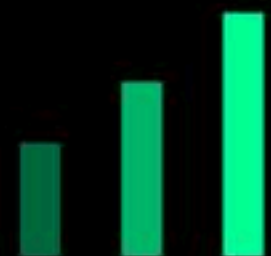


Social posts



Press mentions





# A FUTURE BUILT ON MENTORSHIP

**Why Mentoring is the Essential Infrastructure Our Future Needs Now.**

A future where every young person has a mentor is possible. Building it will require leadership, investment, and a shared commitment to strengthening the human connections that our communities need. Read on to find out how.

[READ THE REPORT](#)



[DONATE](#)



**1**



**2**



**AUDIENCE-CENTRIC  
FUNDRAISING**

**3**



**4**



SHADOW

JACKIE



Friends of Big Bear Valley and Big Bear Eagle Nest Cam  
6d · 🌐

Gizmo did it!... See more

Love

Share in Gizmo's flight How long doe

88K 5.4K comments 6K shares 2.4M views

Friends of Big Bear Valley and Big Bear Eagle Nest Cam  
Jun 5 · 🌐

Exciting times ahead... See more

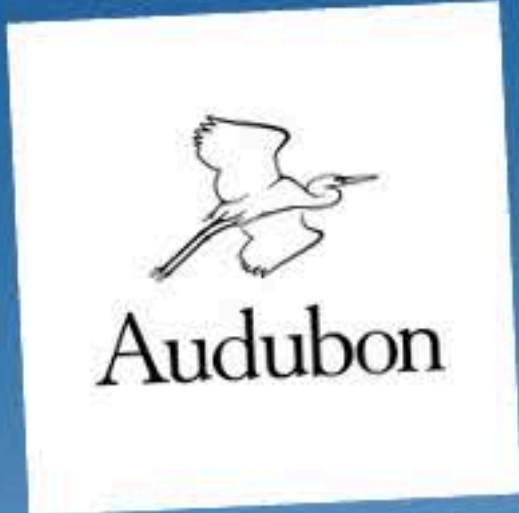
How do eaglets learn to hunt? learn to hunt by observing

15.2K 535 comments 560 shares 212K views

Nature in its glory!

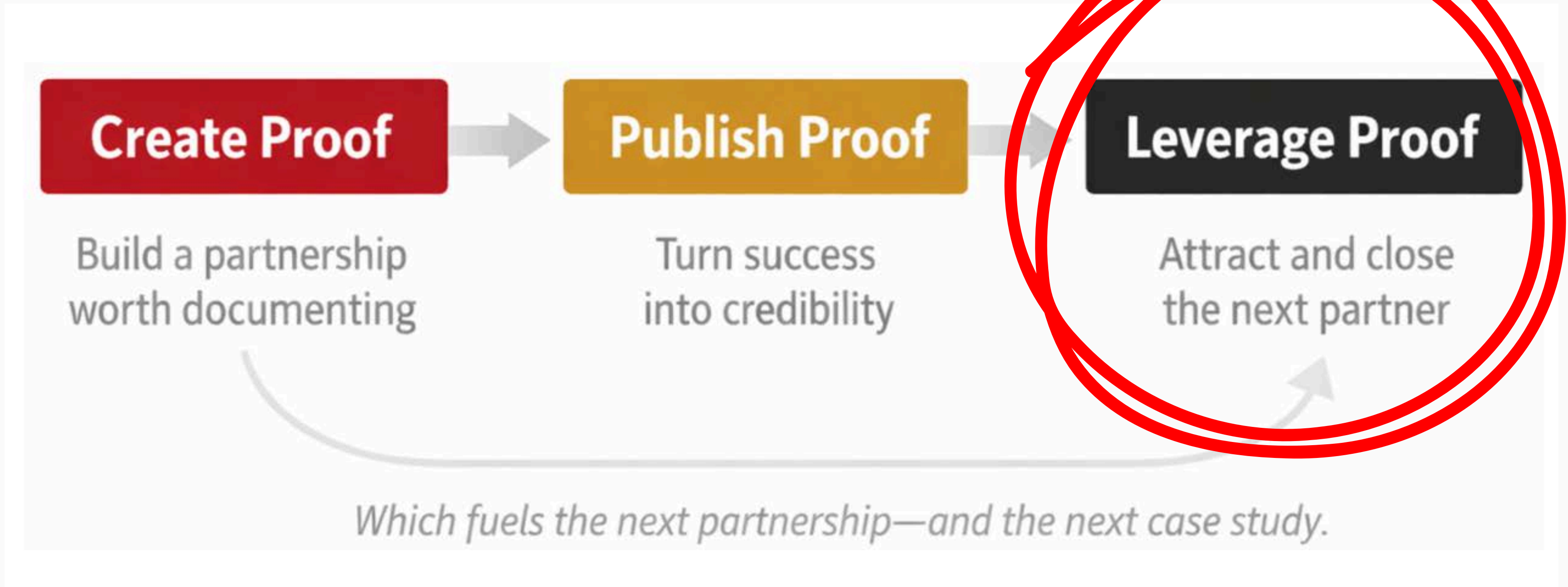
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# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



Doin' Good in  
the Neighborhood  
Applebees

**BOOT BARN**

*Boscov's*

  
**Brochure  
RACKS**

**DEVIL-DOG**  
*Dungarees*

**STORED  
CREDIBILITY**

*festival*  
foods

MLBshop.com 

**Southwest**

**WN**  
WINDOW NATION

  
**WING-STOP**

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**St. Jude Children's  
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**WOUNDED WARRIOR  
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The logo for Children's Miracle Network features a yellow outline of a lightbulb with a red base. Below the lightbulb, the words "Children's Miracle Network" are written in a red, sans-serif font.

**Children's  
Miracle Network**

# Corporate Partnerships

Corporate partners provide the significant financial support needed so Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) can offer life-changing programs and services. Partnerships align with WWP's brand and can be customized to meet your company's goals.

[BECOME A PARTNER](#)

## Meet Our Partners

**EVERY  
MAN  
JACK**



# CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER



## NOVEMBER CORPORATE GIVING NEWS

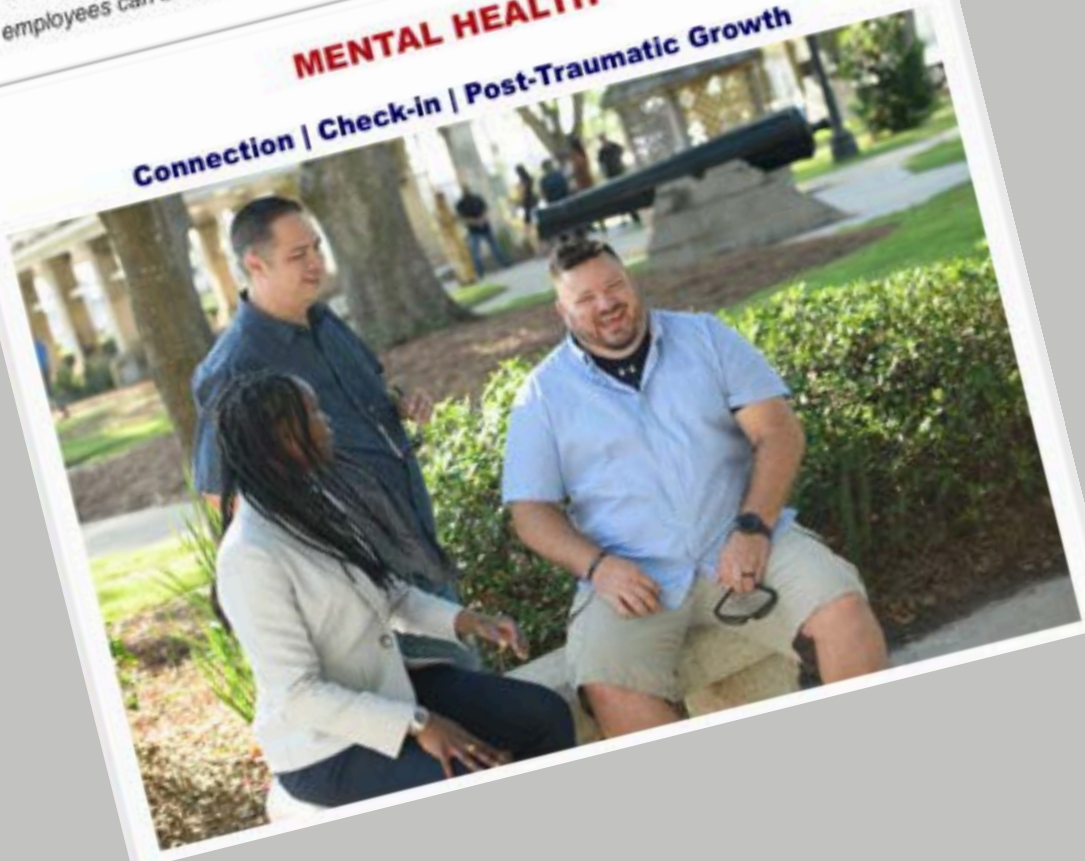
November reminds us of the power of connection — with family, colleagues, and our communities. As we honor veterans and their families this month, we're reminded that a simple check-in, a shared story, or a moment of kindness can change a life.

Keep reading for stories and resources that show connection, resilience, and kindness can make a lasting difference. As the holiday season begins, let's continue sharing the connection and kindness that help veterans and communities thrive.

Warm regards,  
**The Corporate Partnerships Team**  
P.S. Found something meaningful? Forward this newsletter to colleagues so more employees can benefit from these resources.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Connection | Check-in | Post-Traumatic Growth



## EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FUTURE

### CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS HIGHLIGHTS

Happy Holidays from all of us at Save the Children!

Thanks to you, Save the Children reached vulnerable children worldwide with life-changing support, even in the toughest circumstances.

We invite you to watch our short impact video to see the remarkable difference we've made this year!

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

Q4 IMPACT BROUGHT BY YOU



### #PlayItForward Surprise with Mattel

Actress Cobie Smulders teamed up with Save the Children and Mattel, Inc. to surprise children affected by the LA wildfires with a special delivery. The joyful moment shows that play is more than fun—it's a lifeline of hope, healing and possibility.

Check out our LA impact video below.

# BENEFITS OF A NEWSLETTER

- ✓ It builds trust & authority
- ✓ It keeps you top of mind
- ✓ It showcases successes & impact
- ✓ It helps you cultivate & keep more partnerships

**LIVE NOW!** 

**The Brighter Futures Podcast**

**Episode 1:** CPP Deep Dive: What Year-Round Support Really Looks Like

**Guest:** Kristie Dean, The Soul Project



 **The Newest Episode of The Brighter Futures Podcast is LIVE!** 

**LIVE NOW!** 

**The Brighter Futures Podcast**

**Episode 2:** Beyond the Stage - Why Arts Access Matters

**Guest:** Tivon Marcus, Broadway In Boston



 **New Episode of The Brighter Futures Podcast** 



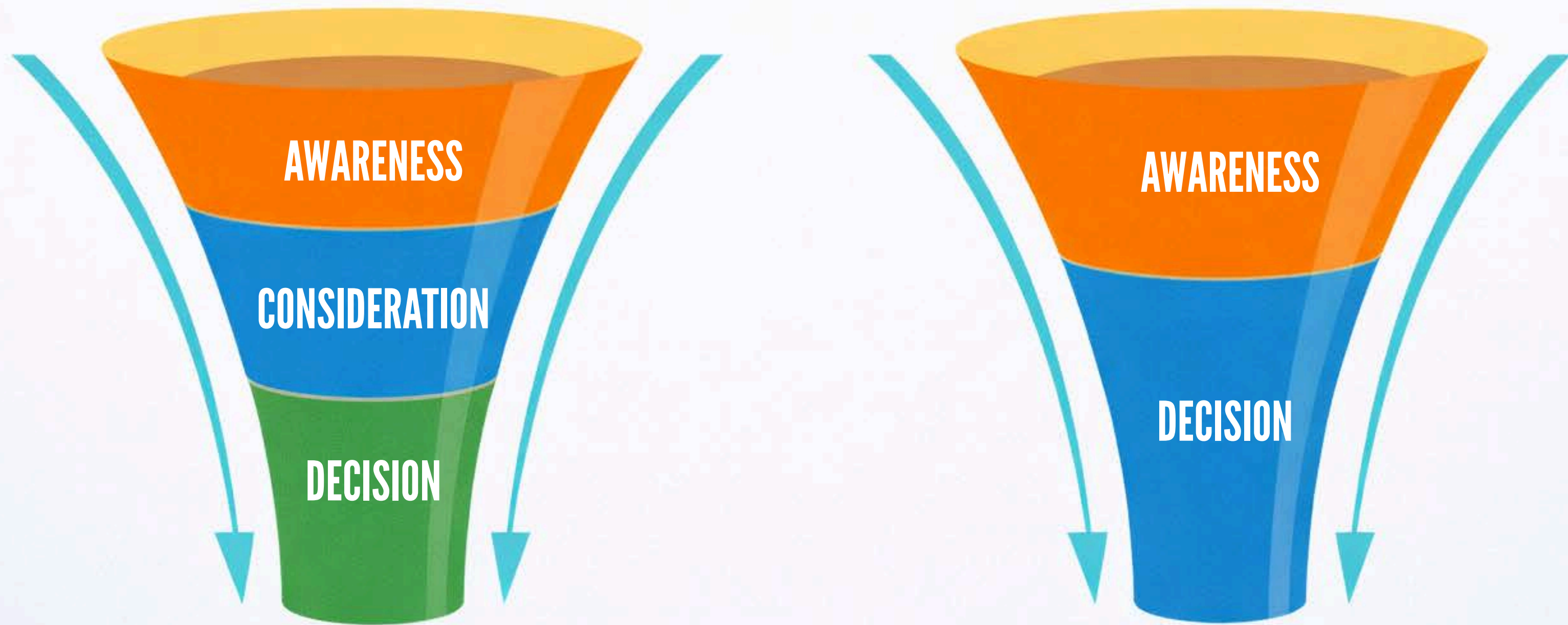
**BEST BUDDIES.**



Best Buddies

# Corporate Partner Summit

# THE FUNNEL DIDN'T DISAPPEAR—IT COLLAPSED



# THE FUNNEL DIDN'T DISAPPEAR—IT COLLAPSED

## OLD MODEL *(Traditional Funnel)*



*Built for a world of controlled messaging and patient buyers.*



**Information Abundance**

**Self-Education**

**Speed**



## NEW REALITY *(Collapsed Funnel)*



**Evaluation now happens before you're invited in.**

**Proof didn't move up the funnel. The funnel collapsed around it.**

# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



A photograph of a dirt path in a forest. The path starts from the left, goes towards the center, and then splits into two paths that lead towards the right. The forest is dense with tall trees and green foliage. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text "WHO THIS WORKS FOR" is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**WHO THIS WORKS FOR**



**IN SUMMARY...**

A photograph of two men in a meeting. The man on the right is wearing a dark suit and has his arms crossed, looking at the other man with a skeptical expression. The man on the left is wearing a light blue shirt and is seen from the side, holding a smartphone. They are sitting at a dark wooden table with a laptop, a glass of water, and some papers. The background is a plain grey wall.

**PARTNERSHIP  
CONVERSATIONS STALL  
BECAUSE OF RISK**

# PROOF LOWERS RISK

You've Done This Before  
It Worked

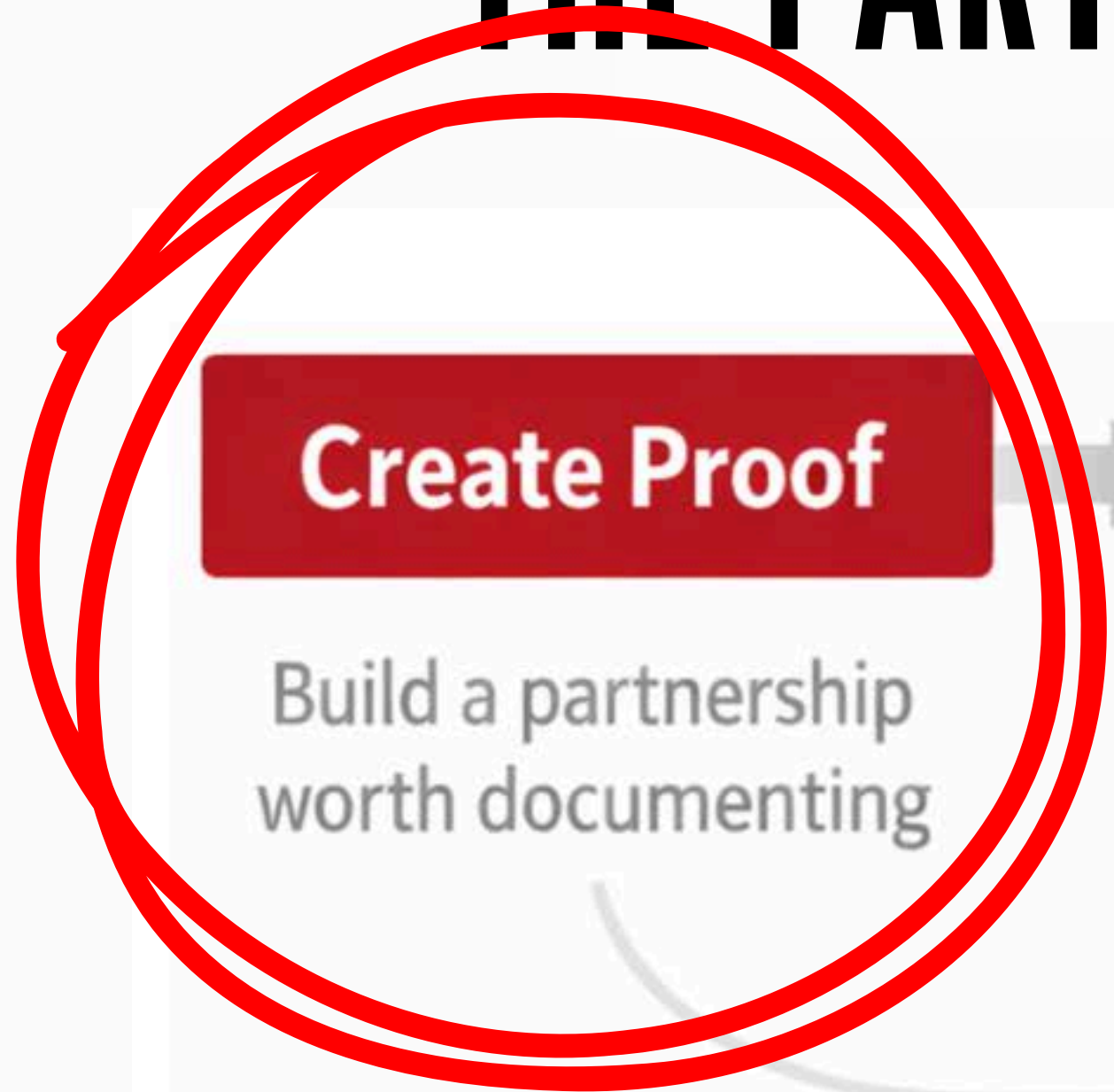
You're a Safe Bet

You Can Do It Again

And Here's How



# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



**Create Proof**

Build a partnership worth documenting

**Publish Proof**

Turn success into credibility

**Leverage Proof**

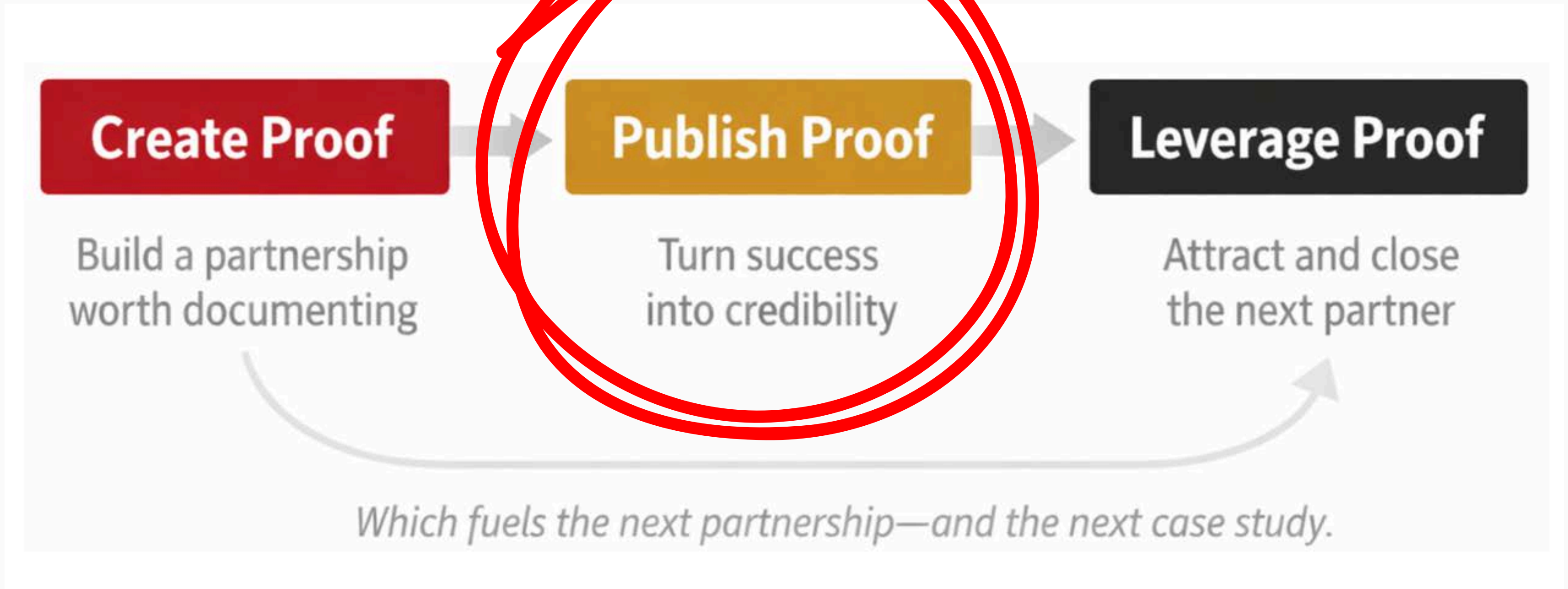
Attract and close the next partner

*Which fuels the next partnership—and the next case study.*

# WHAT COUNTS AS PROOF?



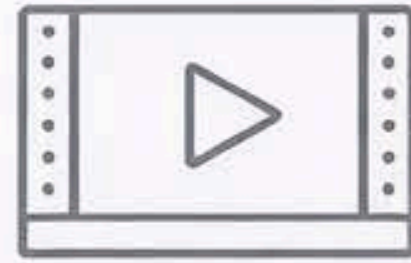
# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



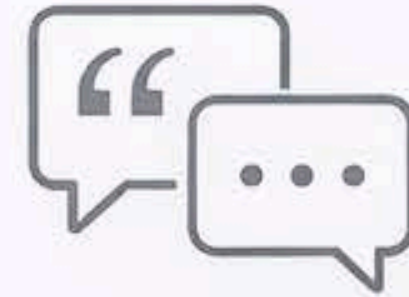
# FORMS OF OUTWARD PROOF



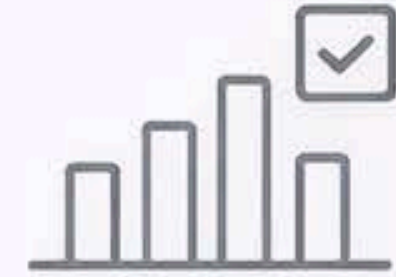
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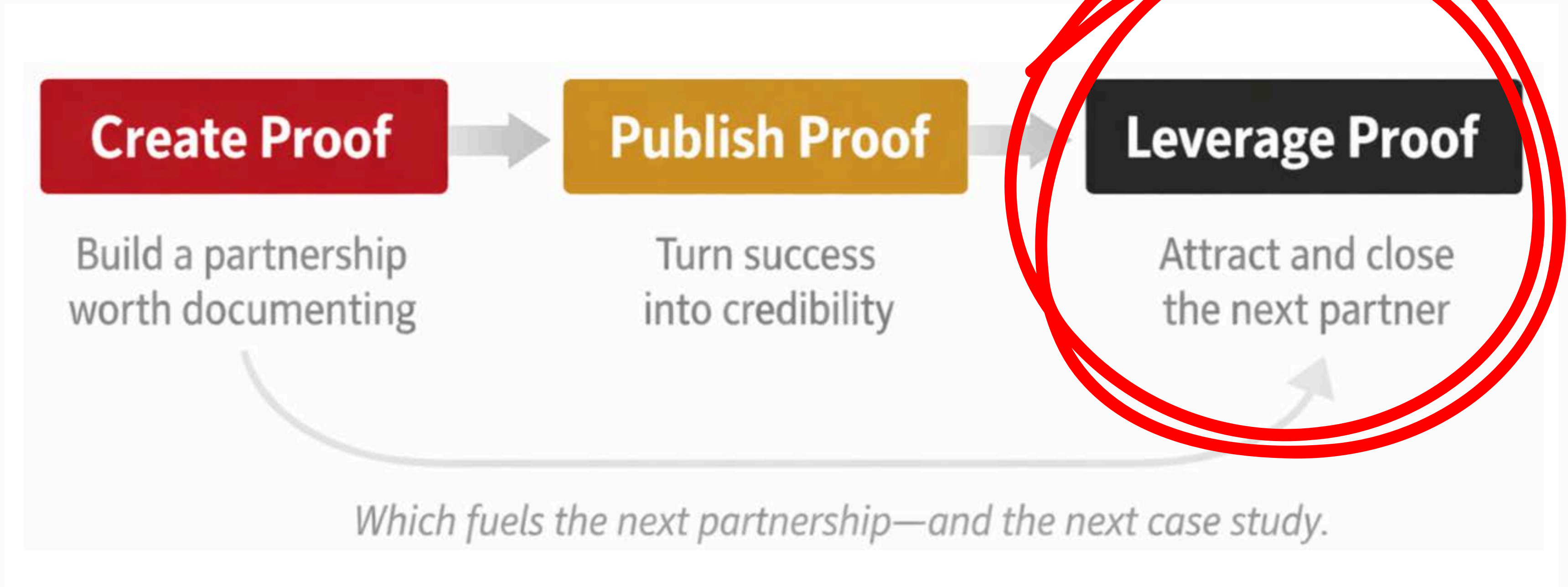
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# THE PARTNERSHIP PROOF SYSTEM



Doin' Good in  
the Neighborhood  
Applebees

**BOOT BARN**

*Boscov's*

  
**Brochure  
RACKS**

**DEVIL-DOG**  
*Dungarees*

 ellianos  
coffee

**EVERY  
MAN  
ACK**

  
**festival**  
foods

MLBshop.com 


**Southwest** 

**WN**  
WINDOW NATION

  
**WING-STOP**  
SALES

# The Partnership Proof Flywheel





**YOUR PROBLEM ISN'T PITCHING.  
IT'S PROOF.**



## **JOE WATERS, SELFISH GIVING**

Questions? [joe@selfishgiving.com](mailto:joe@selfishgiving.com)