



Finding a business partner can take many paths

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Photo: Kye R. Lee/Staff Photographer

Lisa and Lawrence Gardner were already married when they started OMS Strategic Advisors, a strategic consulting and commercial real estate services firm in October 2009.

Lawrence and Lisa Gardner, OMS Strategic Advisors, Frisco

Lawrence and Lisa Gardner were married for a dozen years before co-founding a strategic consulting and commercial [real estate](#) services firm in 2009. One person gave them a year before they'd be divorced. Today the Gardners are still married and expect revenue at OMS Strategic Advisors to jump 100 percent this year from 2010. "We're greater as a whole than apart," said Lisa, 42. "It has forced us to find better ways to dance together." She was ready to return to work after having two children. Before that, Lisa had spent a decade at [PepsiCo](#) and [J.C.Penney Co.](#) as a sales and marketing executive. Between children, she earned her MBA. Lawrence, 46, worked in commercial real estate at [Trammell Crow Co.](#) and [Cushman & Wakefield Inc.](#) for 17 years. He wanted to start a minority-owned firm to focus on national real estate clients. The couple first explored separate entrepreneurial ventures. As they discussed what they wanted in a partner, they realized the ideal person was right in front of them. Business (from Lawrence's clients) and spiritual affirmation clinched the decision, they said. Lawrence is the visionary and financial whiz. Lisa is the organizer and strategist. She keeps him grounded, and he helps her see the big picture. Their challenge is being able to balance growing a business with raising a family. Lawrence works longer hours but has more quality time with his family. Lisa picks up Lauren, 8, and Lawrence, 4, from school every day. They share toting the kids to gymnastics and soccer, cooking and other family duties. They eat dinner together most nights. "Our kids see us working, but they deserve parents, not business partners," Lawrence said. "If we succeed at our business but fail at our family, we get an F."