

A close-up photograph of a hand adjusting a small gear in a complex mechanical system of larger gears. The hand is positioned at the top, with fingers carefully placing or adjusting a small gear between two larger ones. The gears are metallic and have a weathered, industrial appearance. The background is a solid, muted blue color. The overall image conveys a sense of precision, manual adjustment, and mechanical complexity.

Organization Alignment: What Should You Change?

BY DON ZILLIOUX, PH.D.

Many tribal councils, boards, CEOs and general managers involved in tribal business enterprises perceive organization alignment as a tough, daunting challenge—and it can be if the process is not well-defined and accepted by everyone from top to bottom in the organization.

What is organization alignment? It's a state in which every person in the organization has a clear and agreed-upon understanding of his or her role in delivering the organization's strategy and objectives. It's obtained through a process of numerous (and sometimes heated) discussions leading to consensus on what results each team in the organization (and each member of each team) is accountable to deliver in support of the overall strategy.

What do you imagine would happen if you asked the first employee on your gaming floor how they would know at the end of the year that they had been effective?

There are two types of alignment: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal alignment refers to the resolution of all role overlaps within the team and between teams so that waste and conflict are minimized.

Vertical alignment refers to the sufficiency of output through all the parts of the organization so that the results that need to be produced are accounted for (i.e., nothing falls between the cracks).

Alignment starts with the leadership team having clarity and agreement on the top-level outputs of the organization. We call these effectiveness areas. They describe the important results the organization must deliver to achieve its long-term strategies. To make these results tangible and manageable, key success metrics must be developed for each one and there must be agreement among all team members that these are the collective success indicators for the organization.

The next step in the alignment process is that each team member must reach agreement with all other team members on his or her individual effectiveness areas and success measures, which, again, must align both horizontally and vertically with the team overall.

To fully align the organization, this process is repeated in a cascading fashion. This will ensure your people at all levels are doing the right things for the right reasons and that your teams are reaching their maximum potential.

We've spoken of the alignment of results, which is an extremely important

aspect of alignment, but effective organization alignment encompasses a broader scope:

- > Alignment of activities in support of results.

- > Alignment of decision-making authorities.

- > Alignment of process accountabilities.

- > Alignment of the team leaders' roles with the needs of their respective teams.

In other words, effective organization alignment is a broad set of concepts and processes that need to be approached systematically and with discipline, and continuously maintained and adjusted as situations evolve and new opportunities arise.

With effective organization alignment, your team members are committed to the established vision and direction. They understand the strategy, understand their roles within the overall plan, and are dedicated to getting it done. Each team also understands the impact of its efforts on the organization and the customer. The net result is that the whole organization becomes stronger and more effective than the sum of its parts, and the whole company is working on the right things at the right time. ♦

How to Build a Sustainably Profitable Business

Eight Types of Change Objectives

- 1 STRUCTURAL OBJECTIVES** deal with reorganization. This might be moving power around by clarifying roles or simply reorganizing.
- 2 EFFECTIVENESS OBJECTIVES** deal with outputs of individuals or the organization. This might relate to improved corporate strategy or, very broadly, to improved organizational effectiveness.
- 3 DECISION-MAKING OBJECTIVES** are critical in any organization. Should decision-making be more centralized or more decentralized? Should power be moved?
- 4 INTERFACE OBJECTIVES** deal with relationships between the organization's parts. The most obvious one is between casino operations and marketing, which sometimes do not cooperate as much as they should.
- 5 COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES** must have everyone's agreement not only that it needs to be improved but also exactly what that means.
- 6 FLEXIBILITY OBJECTIVES** deal with changes in power and resources of members of the senior team and with overcoming the resistance of managers.
- 7 INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIVES** relate generally to personal or interpersonal needs, such as job satisfaction and improved candor.
- 8 STYLE OBJECTIVES** deal with the choice of managerial and organizational style. Should the organization have a bureaucratic, separated kind of style or should the organization be a more dedicated, production-oriented type?

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