

Leadership Barometer 164 The Power of Alignment

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When leaders create a new strategy, they often forget to include the power of alignment. The strategic process is usually a major event in the history of an organization. There are several steps involved. It may take months or even years to complete a new strategic plan.

I will outline my favorite process for building a new strategy below. One essential ingredient that guarantees success is the full alignment of the entire team. Unfortunately, that element is often a missing piece as the organization unveils the new strategy. That void can be the kiss of death for the strategy and actually for the entire organization.

Steps to a strategic plan

I suggest the following items in the order I prefer to use them when working with organizations. You may use other patterns or items in different situations.

1. **Values** – Values form the *basis* for any organizational activity. If these are vague or weak, then the entire process will flounder.
2. **Vision** – Any organization needs a clear view of where they *intend to go* and when they will arrive.
3. **Purpose** – This is a statement of *why* we are doing this work. It is particularly strong at enrolling people to support the strategy.
4. **Mission** – The mission is a statement of *what* we are trying to do *now*. It contains the guiding principle for everyday activities.
5. **Behaviors** – We need to document how we intend to treat each other in the organization. If we have not spelled out expected behaviors specifically, it is difficult to hold people accountable.
6. **Strategies** – These are the few (4-6) broad areas the organization needs to accomplish in order to reach the vision. The strategies are often called Key Result Areas.
7. **Tactics** – The specific actions needed to fulfill the strategies.
8. **Goals** – Identify the milestones along the way along with expected time frames for delivery.
9. **Measures** – How we intend to track our progress toward the goals.

Now comes the *most important part*. You will accomplish full alignment when all people in the organization are fully committed to make the strategy work. It will be difficult to execute the strategy if this alignment is missing. Here are some tips for achieving alignment.

Involve as many people in the creation of the strategy as possible.

If you roll out the strategy as a “lay-on” from management, the alignment will be missing. People will look at it and think “that’s nice, I wish them good luck.” The strategy will lack the coordinated effort of all people to make it a reality.

Make the strategy visible

Simplify the strategy onto a single sheet of paper and give everyone a copy of it. Go over the document carefully to be sure everyone knows what it represents. Point to areas of the strategy when making future decisions so people see the connection.

Reinforce people who follow the strategy

Make sure to make people feel good when they are on track with the strategy. Also, if some individuals start pushing in a different direction, take them aside and give them some coaching. They must either get on board or leave the organization.

Celebrate the small wins along the way

It takes a lot of energy to have a successful strategy, and people need to feel reinforced along the way. When a group takes a positive step in the right direction, make sure they feel that reinforcement.

Conclusion

If you follow the steps above, you will have true alignment and reap the benefits of it.

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