

Strategic Alignment

For implementation of any strategy to be successful, all of the key elements of the system must reinforce each other in support of the strategy. Strategic alignment is critical—without alignment, the best strategic plan will never be fully achieved.¹

“Strategic alignment is the process and the result of linking an organization's structure and resources with its strategy and business environment (regulatory, physical, etc.). Strategic alignment enables higher performance by optimizing the contributions of people, processes, and inputs to the realization of measurable objectives and, thus, minimizing waste and misdirection of effort and resources to unintended or unspecified purposes.” (Wikipedia, 2019).

Strategic Alignment refers to the process of aligning all stakeholders, both internally and externally, to be focused and committed to achieving one goal: the organization's vision.

Measurement & Reward Systems

When an organization measures something, it is not only gauging performance but is making a statement that it is important. Therefore, when it is not measuring something, it sends the message that it is not important. Be sure the measurement system reflects what elements of your organization are or are not important.

Structure & Process

This includes organization design, decision processes, and information systems. Be sure that the internal workings of your organization support one another and determine if your processes are optimally streamlined. Create a logic model to help you visualize your organization's theory of change and its processes in order to address specific areas that need better alignment.

People

Be sure all employees are focused, skilled, and motivated. Focus is accomplished by defining and communicating your strategic choices with clarity and simplicity. Also important is employees' high-commitment to your organization as their level of motivation is linked to your organization's success. A critical component to your organization is the leaders' alignment of words and deeds—set the example and employees will follow.

¹ All information originates and is credited to William G. Pietersen (2004), *Strategic Learning: A Leadership Process for Creating and Implementing Breakthrough Strategies*.

Culture

An organization's values and behaviors must directly support its strategy. A culture is the values and practices shared by the members of the group. Organization culture is important because it can make or break an organization. Organizations with an adaptive culture that is aligned to its goals routinely outperform their competitors. Some studies report the difference at 200% or more. To achieve results like this for your organization, you have to figure out what your culture is, decide what it should be, and move everyone toward the desired culture. Here are some characteristics of company cultures that others have used successfully. Decide which work for your company and implement them.

- Mission clarity
- Employee commitment
- Fully empowered employees
- High integrity workplace
- Strong trust relationships
- Highly effective leadership
- Effective systems and processes
- Performance-based compensation and reward programs
- Customer-focused
- Effective 360-degree communications
- Commitment to learning and skill development
- Emphasis on recruiting and retaining outstanding employees
- High degree of adaptability
- High accountability standards
- Demonstrated support for innovation

You will need to align your organization's culture with your strategic goals if it isn't already. Here are some suggestions.

- Develop a specific action plan that can leverage the good things in your current culture and correct the unaligned areas.
- Brainstorm improvements in your formal policies and daily practices.
- Develop models of the desired actions and behaviors. Use the model below as a guide to your strategies and specific examples for each.
- Communicate the new culture to all employees—Over-communicate the new culture and its actions to everyone.