

Article

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Alignment

Few people would question the need for the alignment of an automobile. Yet getting the views and actions of people aligned within an organization often seems less important. Yet I believe this is the most frequent reason for sub-optimal and sometimes extremely bad organizational performance. Why are people not “singing from the same song sheet”? Three reasons: no agreed strategic direction; misinformation, and outright hostility to the new direction.

The lack of a strategic direction can be remedied by establishing clarity about the sustainable customer value needed by the organization. The fact that people are uninformed means that excellent communication and effective leader engagement is required.

As for hostility, its frequently incubated near to the top. It’s amazing how frequently I find outright hostility to the strategic direction within management teams. In my view, there is no room in a successful organization to have residual hostility to strategic decisions. Senior people need to be reminded that the “train has left the station” on certain issues and they must either get on-side or think about other career options. Too often, the top officer does not play hard enough with people who are generating skepticism and confusion.

About the fortitude of his generals in prosecuting his war strategy, Napoleon was said to have trenchantly observed, that “shooting one General was good for the morale”. Today’s executives need not be so brutal, but never should they permit misalignment within the senior ranks.

