



What's Your Strategic Alignment Quotient?

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How can you make sure that you and your peers are working collectively for the greater good of the organization?

Strategic planning is nothing new. Most organizations go through some sort of annual strategic planning exercise to determine long-term goals and the key strategic priorities and initiatives that should drive resource allocation. Whether or not their process is systematic or ad hoc, the overarching desire is to create organizational alignment of work effort and identify the appropriate measures to gauge how well they are performing against their plans.

Regardless of whether your organization is systematic or ad hoc in its strategic planning, it is critical that you, as the CLO, and other senior leaders in your organization regularly confirm that your work and priorities are strategically aligned with the priorities of the organization. A rowing team must work together in alignment in order to win, or at least cross the finish line. An orchestra must cooperate in alignment to make beautiful music. Similarly, senior-level organizational leaders must ensure that the workforce also works in total alignment for the greater good so that their organizations can win (achieve their strategic goals) and make beautiful music (act as a high-performing organizational culture).

In order for you and other senior leaders in your organization to understand your strategic alignment quotient, it is helpful to examine current leadership behaviors. Take a few minutes to score the following items, using a scale of 0 (not at all or “don’t know”) to 4 (to a very large extent):

- I understand the organization’s vision, strategic goals and priorities, and how they relate to the work that I do.
- I help members on the team that I lead understand the organization’s vision, strategic goals and priorities.
- I regularly use the organization’s vision, strategic goals and priorities to help determine my own goals and priorities.
- I make decisions that are clearly aligned with and support the organization’s vision, strategic goals and priorities.
- Members of the team that I lead regularly update their own goals and priorities to

ensure they are aligned with the organization’s vision, strategic goals and priorities.

Although this mini-self-assessment is only meant to be a rough directional indicator, it can assist you to determine whether you need to implement any behavioral changes. If you scored from 15 to 20, there is little evidence that you need to improve your current behaviors and strategic alignment quotient. If you scored from 10 to 14, you should begin rethinking your behaviors and improving your strategic alignment quotient. If you scored 9 or less, rethinking your current behaviors and improving your strategic alignment quotient should be a high priority.

So, what are some ways you and other senior leaders can improve your strategic alignment quotient? How can you make sure that you and your peers are working collectively for the greater good of the organization?

- **Eliminate out-of-alignment initiatives:** Many projects and initiatives that are not strategically required may consume critical resources without supporting the greater good. Consider eliminating these projects or initiatives or placing them on hold.
- **Conduct regular alignment checks:** Allowing critical resources to be misaligned for six or nine months could lead to significant drops in organizational performance. Design quarterly (or at minimum, semi-annually) alignment checks that help validate the vertical and horizontal alignment of strategic priorities and resource allocation throughout the organization.
- **Close alignment gaps:** Be sure to reallocate resources when alignment gaps are discovered. This may mean eliminating your pet project or initiative, or helping the members on your team let go of some of their pet projects or initiatives.

Taking the lead in this manner will require you to assess how aligned you are to the organization’s vision and strategic goals and priorities. It also means fulfilling your CLO role by providing other senior leaders with the tools and resources to assess how strategically aligned they are with the organization’s focus. ■

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