STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT PRE-SCAN

Building your strategic alignment business case... the pre-scan

So, you've formed your organisation's strategic alignment coalition, working with your colleagues in HR, Strategy, Transformation, Technology and the Chief of Staff.

What now?

The first step is to conduct a strategic alignment pre-scan. This will help you gain the Executive mandate to tackle strategic alignment by providing:

- A preliminary picture of strategic alignment in your organisation
- An indication of where misalignment may exist, why it exists and what it costs.

How does the pre-scan work?

There are three main steps to the strategic alignment pre-scan.

1	**The leader quick questionnaire**
2	**The strategic alignment coalition survey**
3	**The coalition results discussion.**

The survey and questionnaire could be produced in paper form, one-on-one interviews or using your organisation's polling tool of choice.

How to obtain the Executive mandate

Once you've performed the three main steps in the strategic alignment pre-scan you should have the information you need to begin building the Executive business case for strategic alignment.

Aside from this data, you can do your own research to further strengthen the business case. This includes consulting two documents provided for you. You can find links to this information at clearleaders.com.au/qsgcomms

From Groupthink to Governance...

the global study on strategic alignment. It has a wealth of data and quotations from global leaders across a wide range of professions.

A practical guide to the four shifts for communication leaders...

a simpler guide that helps you prepare for and run a program to enable strategic alignment.

The leader quick questionnaire

Select a group of leaders from all levels across the organisation. Subject to the size of your organisation, the ideal number could be 50 – 100. Ask them to answer these three simple questions:

1	**What are the top priorities for the organisation as a whole right now?**
2	**Think of the most recent time your team had to choose between work on one of those priorities and other work. What did you choose, and why?**
3	**What, if anything, has slowed your team's progress on those priorities in the past three months?**

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The strategic alignment coalition survey

At the same time, select a small group of coalition partners and colleagues. A workable starting point would be 20 people although the more you survey, the better your data will be.

Ask them to complete this survey. You could produce the survey in paper form, conduct one-on-one interviews or use your organisation's polling tool of choice.

SECTION A. THE PROBLEM: WHERE IS STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT BREAKING DOWN?

1. How often do organisational priorities lose out to competing divisional, team or operational demands?

SCALE: ◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Sometimes ◯ Often ◯ Very often ◯ Unable to assess

Give a recent example, including what took precedence and why.

2. How often do differences in priorities between teams or divisions make it harder to deliver the organisation's strategy?

SCALE: ◯ Never ◯ Rarely ◯ Sometimes ◯ Often ◯ Very often ◯ Unable to assess

Give an example of where this has happened.

3. How consistently do the Executive's decisions, resource allocations and visible behaviours support the organisation's stated priorities?

SCALE: ◯ Not at all ◯ Slightly ◯ Moderately ◯ Very ◯ Completely ◯ Unable to assess

Where have you observed consistency or inconsistency?

SECTION B. THE CONSEQUENCES: WHAT IS MISALIGNMENT COSTING US?

4. How frequently have you observed the following problems arising from competing priorities, unclear direction or poor coordination?

Potential consequence	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Unable to assess
Duplicated work or rework	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Delayed decisions or execution	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Firefighting or constantly changing priorities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Projects or initiatives not delivering expected results	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Frustration, conflict or reduced cooperation between teams	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. Thinking of a recent example. What was the impact on the organisation?

Briefly describe what happened and the consequences, including any time lost, resources wasted, delays or impact on people. Include figures where available, distinguishing estimates from known costs.

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SECTION C. THE CAPABILITY GAPS: WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

6. How well does the organisation currently do the following?

Strategic alignment practice	Not at all	Poorly	Moderately	Well	Very well	Unable to assess
Executive leaders work as one team with shared responsibility for strategy	○	○	○	○	○	○
Alignment with strategic priorities is directly measured and reviewed	○	○	○	○	○	○
Accountability for maintaining strategic alignment is clearly assigned	○	○	○	○	○	○
Employees and managers have opportunities to discuss and influence strategic priorities	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leaders and teams regularly review priorities and adjust as circumstances change	○	○	○	○	○	○
People leaders are equipped to connect strategy with everyday work	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. Where have you seen people and teams work particularly well together to deliver an organisational priority? What made that possible?

This deliberately captures positive examples, not just problems.

The coalition results discussion

This discussion plays an important role for three reasons:

- It allows the strategic alignment coalition to analyse and understand the state of strategic alignment
- It provides a forum for mapping the Executive business case
- It gives the coalition the chance to meet and align as a team.

Once everyone has completed the questionnaire independently, bring the coalition together to discuss three questions.

1. **What are the most significant strategic alignment problems revealed by our responses?**
   Where do we see common patterns? Where do our views differ? Which observations are supported by credible examples?
2. **What is the business impact of these problems, and what could improve if we addressed them?**
   Identify the strongest evidence of the misalignment tax, particularly lost time, wasted capacity, slower execution and effects on people.
3. **What needs to change, and what should we ask the Executive to support?**
   Consider the most important capability gaps, what additional evidence is required and the mandate needed for a fuller diagnostic and coordinated action.

Good luck. This is a project that could have meaningful strategic value for your organisation.

> If you'd like to talk through the research, explore what it means for your organisation, or understand how we can support your work, reach out to Zora Artis and Wayne Aspland at clearleaders.com.au. You can also connect with us on LinkedIn.

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