JOIN US

Moving as One: why we need you in the strategic alignment coalition

No single function can enable strategic alignment alone. Each of us sees a different part of the system, and strategic alignment is shaped by all of them. That's why we need to form a coalition.

We are keen to have you join us as we seek to build a stronger focus on strategic alignment across the organisation. Enabling strategic alignment can have a powerful impact on our delivery, performance and employee engagement, as explained below.

But we can't do it alone. We need your help.

What is strategic alignment?

Strategic alignment is when people across an organisation share a genuine understanding of where it's going and why, and that shows up in how they make decisions and do their work. In an aligned organisation, everyone shares clarity, accountability and commitment. It's the ability to Move as One™.

Goals are reflected in every employee's:

PRIORITIES	ACCOUNTABILITY	CAPABILITIES
Day-to-day work, structure and conversations.	Reward and recognition.	Development plans and decision rights.

It also has to run in three directions. It runs vertically from the executive to the frontline, horizontally across functions, and outward to customers and stakeholders.

The alignment paradox. Everyone values strategic alignment but few organisations are aligned.

Despite the strong focus on strategic alignment over recent years, the needle is barely shifting.

- In a 2018 global survey of communication leaders, 74% of respondents said strategic alignment was fundamental to achieving their goals, but only 13% believed their organisation was highly aligned.[1]
- Seven years later, Oxford's Jonathan Trevor found nearly the same result in a global group of executive leaders: 72% and 14%.[2]

The respondents were different and the timing was different (seven years apart), but the results mirrored each other.

Clearly, strategic alignment is fundamental to delivery and performance. That's why it matters.

The misalignment tax.

Every organisation pays it, and most don't know how much. It shows up in four ways.

TIME	CAPACITY	SPEED	RELATIONSHIPS
Firefighting, re-aligning priorities and fixing downstream issues.	Duplicated work, rework, misdirected effort and work left unfinished.	Slower decisions, delayed execution and reduced adaptability.	Reduced trust, higher disengagement, lower talent retention and false harmony.

> *"You can keep people very busy, but if there isn't alignment, they're busy without hitting the targets."*
>
> **André Oberholzer, Group Head Corporate Affairs Sappi Limited**

[1] Zora Artis and Wayne Aspland, 'Strategic alignment – how communicators can change the face of leadership', 2018.
[2] Trevor, Jonathan, Oxford Strategic Alignment Study, 2025 and 'What Leaders Get Wrong About Strategic Alignment', HBR 15 January 2026.

© 2026 Zora Artis and Wayne Aspland | Clear Leaders | clearleaders.com.au

Research puts a cost on it:

An estimated 37% of company value is lost to poor execution every year.[3]

Leadership teams that strongly disagree on direction are 77% more likely to miss their financial targets.[4]

How can a stronger focus on strategic alignment help us?

By working together to enable strategic alignment, we can have a powerful impact on the performance and future of our organisation.

- **Execution and performance:** leadership teams strongly aligned on direction are significantly more likely to meet their financial targets.
- **Speed and agility:** we can move fast and change direction without losing the thread.
- **Engagement and trust:** in the words of one CEO, strategic alignment unlocks "discretionary effort, discipline, hope, and enjoyment in working together."
- **Less waste:** fewer silos and less duplication of work and firefighting. Most leaders who take this on find they are redirecting effort they already spend on the symptoms of misalignment, not adding to their load.

At the same time, there can be benefits to our teams as well.

- **Greater strategic impact:** you help shape how strategy lands, not just deliver your part of it. You can also help build what organisations need to stay coherent through AI and constant change.
- **More influence:** A greater strategic impact will inevitably lead to a stronger voice.
- **Less misalignment landing on your desk:** fewer conflicting requests, less rework and fewer fires to fight.

How can we enable strategic alignment?

Research has shown there are four key shifts needed to align an organisation. They are:

1	**From a group of leaders to a leadership group.**	The executive builds shared accountability first, because nothing downstream makes up for misalignment at the top.
2	**From proxies to proof.**	We measure strategic alignment directly instead of assuming it from engagement or financial results.
3	**From cascade to conversations.**	We replace one-way messages with dialogue that builds shared meaning, and we equip the people leaders who make it happen.
4	**From annual to agile.**	We build strategic alignment into existing rhythms so we catch drift while it's still cheap to fix.

What we're asking

The first step is to win an Executive mandate to focus on strategic alignment. We can do this by collaborating on three activities:

- Come together as a strategic alignment coalition and discuss the role each of us will play.
- Run a small-scale scan to get a sense of how aligned our organisation is today. We can do this by combining a purpose-built strategic alignment diagnostic (we can provide) with relevant data we may already have (e.g. employee engagement data).
- Use the background information we have as well as the data we have collected to create a business case to discuss with the Executive and seek their mandate.

We can't do this alone. But we can do this together.
If we're aligned.

[3] Cascade, State of Strategy Report 2025.
[4] Trevor, Jonathan, 'What Leaders Get Wrong About Strategic Alignment', HBR 15 January 2026.

© 2026 Zora Artis and Wayne Aspland | Clear Leaders | clearleaders.com.au