

SIGN IN

SRM EXECUTIVE NETWORK
HR PEOPLE + STRATEGY

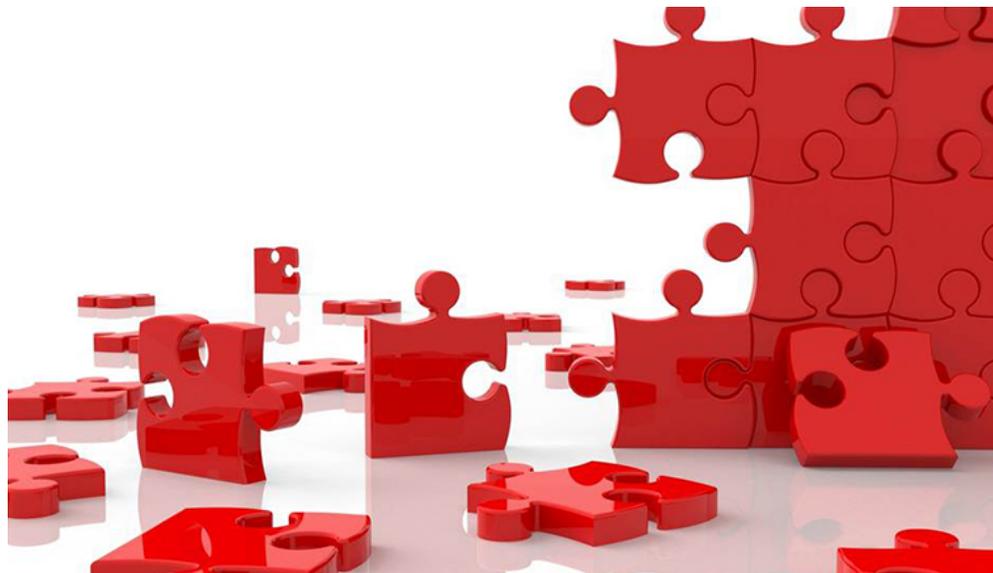
JOIN NOW

BLOG

June 19, 2017

9 SIGNS YOUR ORGANIZATION IS MISALIGNED

By Riaz Khadem and Linda Khadem



If you're fighting fires at work and never seem to have time to do the important things, if you're working on projects that don't seem to advance at a good pace, if you're working hard and yet your company doesn't get to the next level, then you might be experiencing misalignment.

Confusion and rumors are the byproducts of a misaligned organization.

Symptoms

A company is misaligned when people pursue goals and agendas that are incongruent with each other and do not combine to effectively advance a single purpose. One way to determine the extent to which your company is misaligned is to watch for the following symptoms:

1. **Decision making takes too long.** Slow decision-making decreases the momentum needed for growth and puts your company at a competitive disadvantage, particularly when you're up against aggressive competitors and more agile organizations. While there are legitimate reasons for taking time to make decisions, if the slow pace is caused by lack of clarity as to who should make the decision, or poor understanding of the vision and strategy of the organization, then these conditions inhibit action and indicate a lack of alignment.
2. **There are too many meetings.** Meetings are necessary for exchanging thoughts and ideas, making plans, and reviewing progress. But organizations often are stifled by too many long and unfocused meetings that waste time and drain productivity. If this is the case in your company, the underlying

- cause could be lack of clear definition of accountability. When it's unclear who is accountable, then everyone is accountable and too many people are invited to meetings. In organizations hampered by a strict hierarchical culture, functional managers find it necessary to be present in meetings, or send their representatives to attend. As a result, meetings become too large and too long for effective action, and little progress is made when the meeting is over.
3. **There's an overload of email.** When we talk about this symptom, we're not referring to the overload of junk email, which can be eliminated by your computer software. We're talking about legitimate messages that people receive and cannot ignore. Highly skilled knowledge workers spend too much of their time managing email. While important messages should be answered, a large number are unnecessary. Frequently they're sent in such high volume because organizational responsibilities haven't been clearly defined, and managers feel they need to copy a long list of people to protect their actions from criticism or to respect hierarchical protocols. Email overload can be an indicator of misalignment.
 4. **Silos exist.** Silos are departments working as separate units and not sharing information with other departments in the same company. The lack of communication may be intentional or unintentional. Functional units often become turfs that guard information and interests. Silos exist in organizations of all sizes and are an indication of misalignment.
 5. **There's a lack of clarity of responsibility.** When responsibilities are not clearly defined, either no one is taking charge, or someone is taking charge who might not be the right person, or several people are fighting for control. These scenarios have varying effects on the bottom line of the company. When the results are good, people tend to compete to get credit. When the results are bad, people may engage in finger-pointing and assigning blame to each other. These are all symptoms of misalignment.
 6. **There's a lack of empowerment at lower levels.** If the lower levels in your organization don't feel empowered to make decisions, then you might be experiencing misalignment. The employees on the front line are the ones that sell the product, often deliver the product, and serve the customers. When they aren't empowered to act and merely wait to receive instructions from their managers, customers suffer and customer loyalty is lost. This is an important symptom of misalignment. Lower levels should be empowered with a clear definition of responsibilities; they are your link to customers, with the critical role of helping your company align with the market.
 7. **Communication is selective, protecting individual interests.** If communication among people is not open and free-flowing, or if people are cautious about sharing information, you have an alignment problem. Information is not owned by turfs. It belongs to the company and should be available to whomever has a legitimate need for it. When a manager and a direct report converse, if the direct report selectively shares information or hides information from the manager, no useful outcome will result from the meeting.
 8. **There's a lack of motivation in the organization.** This is a general malaise you would find in misaligned organizations. It's the result of multiple misaligned elements described above. Lack of motivation leads to apathy, where people have the attitude of 'whatever.' Apathy is a serious condition that can impact your success. It is the opposite of being unified in purpose, having a clear vision and a strategy for success.
 9. **Confusion and rumors proliferate.** When alignment is absent, people become confused as to where your organization is going, what they should do and why. When people are left confused for too long, many revert to gossip, sharing opinions and news that could become distracting or destructive. Confusion and rumors are the byproducts of a misaligned organization.

Misalignment is real and more rampant in organizations than leaders realize. The good news is that it is also curable. Once you have the tools and tactics you need to unify your team, clarify accountability, and encourage cross-functional collaboration, the result will be a streamlined organization that is able to provide outstanding value to customers and employees.

The Authors:

Riaz Khadem, Ph.D., (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/riaz-khadem-87840a34/>) is the founder and CEO of Infotrac (<http://infotrac.com/>), a consulting firm that specializes in aligning and transforming organizations. He has more than 25 years of experience in strategy deployment, performance management, leadership, and cultural transformation. He is the coauthor of *One Page Management* and *Total Alignment: Tools and Tactics for Streamlining Your Organization* (<http://www.infotrac.com/book/>).

Linda Khadem, J.D., (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/linda-khadem-617b286/>) is executive vice president of Infotrac (<http://infotrac.com/>) and serves as corporate counsel and creative advisor. She is the coauthor of *Total Alignment: Tools and Tactics for Streamlining Your Organization* (<http://www.infotrac.com/book/>).

Tags: alignment agility organizational effectiveness