

## **Leading From Within (Part 2) Aligning Your Organisation for full Potential**

**By**

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In the first part of this article we discussed the Life Alignment Model © and applied it to the individual. We suggested that when our core purpose, values, competencies and behaviours are clear and aligned with each other, our sense of self becomes stronger and we can more fully reach our potential. In this article we apply the Organisational Alignment Model (OAM ©) and discuss how it contributes to the success of an organization.

Imagine a company that has a clear and strong mission statement that expresses the reason for its existence and what it wants to achieve. This mission statement reaches beyond profitability and exceeding customers' expectations and includes the well-being of its employees and its impact on the physical and social environment. This company also has a clear set of values that are a direct reflection of the mission statement. These values are embraced and manifested by the company's top leaders who find ways of transmitting and cascading them through all the organization, so that they are internalized by its people. These values define areas such as: ethical principles, respect and integrity for people at all levels, and a commitment to excellence and constant innovation. In alignment with its mission statement and values, the company then dedicates time and energy to develop the skills and competencies in its people. The company also encourages, promotes and rewards behaviours and initiatives that are in line with people's skills and an example of excellence. Results are thus evaluated and benchmarked against the company's core purpose and mission.

If your reaction to the above is "this is O.K. in theory", then consider this. A Gallup Poll of 55,000 people in the US found that four attitudes when taken together, correlate strongly with higher profits. These are: workers feel they have the opportunity to do what they are best at (alignment of skills and behaviours); workers believe their opinions count (alignment of self with company); workers

feel that their co-workers are committed to quality (shared values at group level); workers make a direct connection between their work and the organisation's mission (alignment of self with core purpose and values).

Moreover, a research study that identified some of the best companies that one could work for in the U.K., showed that the overriding factor distinguishing the top companies was the quality of life they offered at work. The most important factors that determined this were: respect for the individual (values); a friendly non-aggressive environment (values, behaviour, skills); a relationship of trust and openness between management and the rest of the staff (purpose and values); and opportunities for learning and development (values and skills). These factors lead to personal fulfillment and high morale which are closely linked to outstanding performance that impacts heavily on an organisation's financial success. When a company manages to align its mission, values, skills and behaviours, and when these embrace not only profitability but also the human factors mentioned, people will perform, not only because they have to, but because they want to, and this makes all the difference.

The Organizational Alignment Model © can also be used as a way of assessing interventions in the organisation. All too often, when faced with a problem, companies make the mistake of barking up the wrong tree. For example, the top management of a company which we will refer to as Superfish Ltd., realized that its employees had low morale and were demotivated. The response was to provide them with "Motivational Training" that was aimed at teaching them to take ownership of their lives and adopt a "healthy" attitude towards work. However, the truth was that the problem was arising from the aggressive way the managers were dealing with the employees. Although the training was enjoyed and morale rose for a few weeks, everything went back to normal after a short while. The senior management team of Superfish Ltd. then complained of an ungrateful and lazy workforce. In fact the problem was exacerbated. In using the OAM © to assess the situation, it becomes clear that while the training was

addressed at the level of competency of employees, the problem was at the level of leadership attitudes and values as well as organizational culture.

The senior management of another company who we shall call Ruthcoz Ltd. also noticed a sense of demotivation and lowered morale. They decided to study the issue and realized that because of aggressive competition, they were placing excessively heavy and stressful demands on the middle management team such that the people concerned were driving the stress downwards towards their people. This took the form of failing to give positive feedback, cutting corners in terms of cordiality with employees, managers coming in with a foul mood and losing their temper, etc. The top leadership of the company took a close look at their work processes and practices and learned ways of working smarter while not necessarily harder. They went to the core of the company and evaluated the mission and values that the company was always committed to. They appraised the culture they wanted to promote making sure that this was not compromised for short term returns and that it reflected their mission and values. They provided the necessary support and resources for the management team and taught them leadership and management skills that helped them perform well under pressure. They also promoted a spirit of excellence and innovation throughout the organization and emphasized a team culture. As a result of this effort, the employees at Ruthcoz Ltd. felt a greater sense of pride and belonging, motivation rose and so did the company's competitive power. In this case the intervention was a success because it addressed the root cause starting from the company's core purpose and moving across the different levels of the model ensuring alignment throughout. This provided long-term, solid change that helped the company in its organic growth rather than the quick-fix attempt of Superfish Ltd.

The training and development programme of Ruthcoz Ltd. addressed key issues around the leadership of the company that were affecting people's morale and performance. A survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit showed that human performance ranks higher than productivity and technology as a source of competitive strength. For a company to offer an excellent product or service, it

needs people who want to give their best, and to do this they need an atmosphere that upholds values of learning, respect, human dignity, fairness and care. These values need to be the heart and soul of any organization that wants long-term enduring success in today's business world.