
Symptoms of Organizational Misalignment

Folarin Longe

Many of the high-flying business enterprises that dot Nigeria's corporate landscape began their organizational lives by exhibiting common entrepreneurial profiles.

Key elements of these profiles usually include a belief in strong leadership, tightly focused and personally directed marketing campaigns, quality staff who are personally loyal to the founder or chief promoter and, to the extent often tight finances will permit, the use of technology as a way of reducing labor costs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is also a general identification with the principle of 'meritocracy' as a basis for rewarding those who contribute most to the take off of the organization.

Unfortunately, over time and despite the best efforts to manifest these beliefs in the organization structure and culture, problems in execution soon appear. As the organization starts to grow, so does the need for its strategic focus and values to be reaffirmed, communicated to and assimilated by all organization members.

Increasingly, the challenge of building a high-performance organization is seen

by many observers as being heavily dependent on the appropriate design and proper alignment of five critical business elements:

1. **Mission** - a compelling sense of purpose

2. **Vision** - a picture of the ideal future



of the organization

3. **Strategies** - action steps to achieve the vision

4. **Structure** - clearly defined roles and responsibilities

5. **Culture** - an environment that empowers people to perform at their best

Over time, various symptoms of the misalignment of these elements may begin to manifest, presaging the onset

of an organizational crisis of variable magnitude. Obviously, the form and nature of the symptoms will vary from organization to organization, but my experience suggests that sooner or later one or more of the following features will become part of everyday experience:

- The company's business performance is showing signs of decline and there are no clear strategies as to how deal with the problem.
- Co-ordination problems between units are beginning to develop, particularly with regard to work schedules and decision-making.
- Individual initiative appears to be deteriorating; some staff members appear unsure of their authority.
- Attempts to exploit new business opportunities regularly result in major reorganizations of the company.
- There is an apparent loss of the competitive spirit that once marked the company out as an industry leader; people begin to feel that other, perhaps newer competitors have somehow stolen the thunder from the company.

- Management meetings often end in disagreements over 'philosophy' and faithfulness to the company's founding ideals.
- There is high turnover amongst pioneer staff (i.e. the founding fathers).
- There appears to be an increase in reports of staff using company time to pursue their own interests.
- There is a general feeling that the staffs being hired now are somehow different and perhaps even 'inferior' to earlier hires.
- Random checks on old and new staff alike reveal that many are unable to state what the company's overall mission and objectives are.

The symptoms listed above are a call to action on the part of the executive team. Fortunately, none of the conditions are terminal and prompt action can often bring about an amazing reversal of the situation.



If you would like to know more about what causes organizational misalignment or how to deal with them if you believe they already exist in your organization, please contact:

The Head of Advisory
9B, Onipinla Lane,
Off James Oluleye Street (Harmony Enclave)
Adeniyi Jones Avenue, Ikeja, Lagos.

T: +234-802-055-7775 | E: info@humanedgeline.com

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