

AN ENGAGED AND ALIGNED WORKFORCE

Every organisation's dream

Contents

1. Engagement ▶
2. No alignment without engagement ▶
3. Pitfalls ▶
4. Informing, motivating, developing ▶
5. Five steps to alignment ▶
6. Three case studies ▶

Driven and committed employees who know exactly how they can help to realise your strategic goals and who go the extra mile to get there. *An engaged and aligned workforce* is every organisation's dream. In this report, we explain how alignment is achieved.

1. Engagement

What is engagement? There are many definitions. 'The emotional and intellectual connection an employee has with his work and with the organisation he works for' is how Alan Saks of the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management in Toronto defines it. The Ivey Business Journal maintains that engaged employees are attracted to, and fascinated and inspired by, their work. They care about the future of the organisation they work for and are prepared to invest in it, including outside the confines of their own job description. Because they believe they really can make a difference. Research carried out by Maslach in 2001 even suggests that engagement is the opposite of burnout. The three dimensions of burnout are exhaustion, cynicism and lack of drive. The polar opposites of these are energy, commitment and enthusiasm: three indicators of engagement.

It usually all comes down to the same thing: engagement is the degree to which employees enjoy and feel committed to their work and the organisation they are working for. However, precisely what influences levels of engagement differs for each

individual. Engagement is how you feel about your working environment, your colleagues, the culture, values and conduct of the organisation and the results it achieves. But it is also about the degree of challenge and meaning a person derives from their work and the opportunities they are given to grow and have their contribution recognised.

A high degree of employee engagement yields a great deal for organisations. Engaged employees give the best of themselves each day and tend to be more willing to go the extra mile. They care about the future of the organisation for which they work and are prepared to invest in it because they believe they can make a difference. They are ambassadors for the organisation. This in turn has a positive effect on their output. Studies carried out by the data analysis and management consultancy Gallup (known for, among other things, its global engagement surveys) show that there is a strong connection between engagement and turnover, profits and productivity, regardless of where in the world the organisation is based.

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE DEGREE OF ENGAGEMENT?



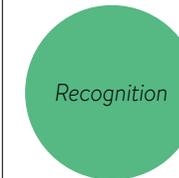
Challenge

- Ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills
- Scope for development



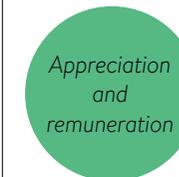
Meaningfulness

- Familiarity with the strategy
- Ability to contribute to the organisation's mission



Recognition

- Identification with the organisation's vision, mission, strategy and values
- Pride



Appreciation and remuneration

- A fair remuneration and adequate appreciation for the work being done
- A higher salary doesn't automatically guarantee greater engagement



Support from organisation and line manager

- Being given encouragement
- Being allowed to make mistakes

EMPLOYEES WHO DELIVER THE BEST PERFORMANCES SCORE ON THREE SPECIFIC POINTS:



Only 5% of employees, however, achieve this 'golden combination'.

(Source: Gallup)

ORGANISATIONS WITH 9.3 ENGAGED EMPLOYEES PER 1 DISENGAGED EMPLOYEE EARN 147% MORE PER SHARE DUE TO, AMONG OTHER THINGS:

- More customer satisfaction
- More productivity
- More revenue
- More quality
- Fewer safety incidents
- Less shrinkage
- Less absenteeism

RESEARCH OF HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL TELLS US THAT A RAISE OF 10% EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION LEADS TO A 15% RAISE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND A RAISE OF 42% IN FINANCIAL RESULTS.

Source: Yellow

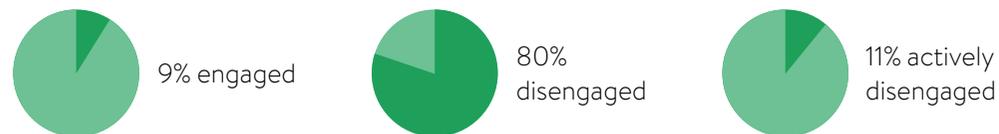


2. No alignment without engagement

Whereas engagement is about whether people feel good in their work, alignment is about the employee conduct that is needed to realise the organisation's goals. Alignment is an important factor in an organisation's good reputation. If an organisation wants to be seen in a certain way externally, it must genuinely be like that internally. Otherwise what you are communicating externally as an organisation consists of little more than 'scrap metal covered by a thin layer of chrome.'

It would be ideal if organisations were to achieve high scores for both engagement and alignment. However, practical experience shows a different picture:

DUTCH EMPLOYEES



Dutch employees regularly express their dissatisfaction and undermine the efforts of colleagues who are performing in the interest of the organisation. This is largely the same the world over. On average, 13% of employees are engaged versus 63% who are disengaged and 24% who are actively disengaged.

There is a lot of ground to make up for in terms of engagement, let alone alignment. After all, if people don't feel committed to what they are doing in the first place, they won't be capable of contributing to an organisation's strategic goals and ambitions. Engagement is an important precondition for alignment.

ENGAGEMENT AND YEARS OF SERVICE

People who have many years of service with an organisation tend to feel less engaged. They have often lost the motivation to make a difference. Among people who have been in service for up to one year:



People who have been in service for 10 years or more:



(Source: Gallup)

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Alignment is about building stable and mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and key internal and external stakeholders. These relationships help organisations to achieve their goals and ambitions. Alignment always begins internally, among employees. If the external promise isn't shared and realised internally, it will not be delivered.

(Source: *The alignment factor*, prof. C. van Riel)

RESULTS ACHIEVED BY AN ALIGNED WORKFORCE

Organisations benefit from having an aligned workforce. In 2007, the consultancy The Corporate Executive Council concluded that if even 10% of an organisation's employees are aligned, this can improve its performance by 2%.

3. Pitfalls

We work daily with our clients to improve their alignment. This practical experience teaches us something new each day. It also helps us to recognise potential stumbling blocks and pitfalls. The three most important are:

1

NEED TO UPHOLD THE STRATEGY

Considerable time is spent on compiling strategies. Strategies often inadvertently never get much further than the boardroom or senior management layer. It is important however to give at least as much attention to its roll-out and implementation. It is only when it has been committed to paper that a strategy actually begins. That is when it has to be transferred to the heads and hearts of the organisation's employees. That is when people have to be encouraged to make a contribution by a story that makes sense and is communicated regularly. With periodic updates and backed by sound evidence. But above all through a creative concept and an activation that appeals to the imagination.

2

COOPERATION IS CRUCIAL

Communications and HR departments often don't work in alignment. Our view however is that it is only when there is genuine cooperation that organisations can really make an impact. A (new) strategy for an organisation requires efforts from both Communications and HR. This could include training management to 'carry employees along' in the strategy. Or recruiting new employees who match the organisation's strategy and values. Or devising an on-boarding programme for new staff.

3

EVERYTHING STANDS OR FALLS WITH LEADERSHIP

Communication about the strategy will only succeed if a manager understands it himself and can translate it clearly to his team. It is important that he can match it to specific actions for the team and set an example. A manager is the crucial linchpin between the executive board and the employee.

4. Working on alignment

A high degree of alignment facilitates the success of an organisation. At the same time, it demands a lot of both management and employees. They will be expected to:

- 1 Be familiar with the strategy
- 2 Be able to implement the strategy
- 3 Act in line with the strategy
- 4 Have insight into what the strategy will deliver for them

In his book *The Alignment Factor*, Professor Cees van Riel describes three factors that contribute to employee alignment.

INFORMING

It starts with informing employees about the organisation's strategic goals and how they can help to achieve them.



TIPS

- Put together a good story
- Ensure an attractive and consistent structure
- Communicate at regular intervals using specific themes
- Help management to 'cascade' the story down the organisation

MOTIVATING

A key factor in the degree of alignment is people's motivation to behave or act in accordance with the organisation's strategic ambitions. Managers play an important role in motivating their teams.



TIPS

- Give specific examples of how people can contribute to the strategy and make it clear what their contribution will deliver
- Generate dialogue
- Create an open culture
- Celebrate successes

DEVELOPING

The extent to which people are trained in the skills, conduct or knowledge needed to contribute to strategic goals will determine the degree of alignment.



TIPS

- Ask management and employees what they require in order to optimise the roll-out of the strategy, and then invest in it. The realisation of strategic ambitions stands or falls with conduct.
- Work with HR.

5. Five steps to alignment

The aforementioned three theoretical factors can be translated into five practical steps. PROOF uses these steps to achieve alignment.

1

GAINING INSIGHT

What does the organisation stand for? What do employees and managers themselves say? How do other stakeholders regard the organisation? Research, a quick-scan and organisation-wide interviews give us a clear picture of the organisation, allow us to identify what is of concern to people and give us insight into its culture, strategy and the role of each employee. We put the results together in the form of a basic story and also use them as the springboard for all subsequent communication.

2

SETTING GOALS

What do we want to achieve with which target group? What are the main obstacles, and how should we try to get round them? We formulate a well-founded action plan to determine the quick wins and long-term goals. We outline which target groups can be reached, how, with what message, and what degree of regularity. The role and support provided by management are also agreed, and the communications architecture and annual planning schedule are drawn up.

3

DEVELOPING THE IDEA

What is the central idea to which the activities disseminated by Communications and HR will be pegged? How will this be translated into an appealing visual concept? How should this concept be applied within Communications and HR? An overarching concept connects, gives guidance and provides recognition. It also enhances the effects of a communications campaign.

4

ROLLING OUT THE STRATEGY

How do all the aforementioned steps come together? What will this look like? What form will the kick-off take? How will everyone in the organisation get down to work? How will progress be assured? And above all: what evidence can we provide for proceeding in the direction we have chosen? We will then use the concept to develop appropriate tools and resources, and devise activation programmes to keep the strategy at the forefront of everyone's minds.

5

MEASURING AND ADJUSTING

What works well and what doesn't? Where do we need to adjust things? What scores are being achieved for the different goals? It's important to gauge whether the efforts that are being made are genuinely having an effect. Measuring and if necessary making interim adjustments is crucial for success.

6. Three case studies

We put these various stages into practice in partnership with our clients. Some of these case studies:

ENGAGEMENT

This starts with commitment and enthusiasm on the part of employees. If they aren't enjoying their working environment or corporate culture, then it's vital to address this first. That can go hand in hand with a change of strategy.

KPMG introduced the change programme true blue, which addresses both its strategy for the coming years and its organisational culture. PROOF helped introducing and implementing the change programme. [Click here to see the case study.](#)



CLEAR STRATEGY

It all starts with a good story. It has to be clear and transparently structured. And it has to specifically state what's expected of employees and how it will benefit in their day-to-day work. The story is the foundation of all further communications.

The concept 'Wij van Jumbo houden van' (At Jumbo, we love...) started with a clear story about the Jumbo DNA, what makes Jumbo unique. Based on that story we set up a communications architecture with key messages per target group.

[Click here to see the case study.](#)



STRONG LEADERSHIP

Implementing the strategy starts with good leadership. A leader fleshes out the strategy with the help of his team. It's important to give managers the necessary support to do this in the form of workshops, toolkits, leadership programmes and so on.

We recently worked with 250 managers on a 'Team SVB: together, learning, doing' project for SVB. They got together in groups and decided what they would do differently from tomorrow onwards. And how they could best share the strategy with their teams.

[Click here to see the case study.](#)



More cases? Take a look at our website →

*Whatever it takes to
tell a great story*