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## Igniting Alignment in Your Organization

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Do you have organizational alignment in your business? By my definition, alignment is a fancy way of saying people in your business care as much as you do and are all working towards the same goal. Furthermore, alignment is not consensus. Consensus is generally overrated and is something that is frequently sought by weak leadership. You can't get everyone to agree all the time. What is needed is recognition of what is important and employee behavior that supports that priority.

### **An example of alignment:**

*I'm working with a statewide foster care organization. While meeting with the CEO he stated to me that no matter how much the senior leadership might disagree, any decision they made had to be in the best interest of the child. Later the same week (in a facility hundreds of miles from the home office) I was speaking to a couple that work as "house parents." They are way down the hierarchy from the CEO. And guess what they said was the most important thing to keep in mind while making decisions? "The best interest of the child."*

**Everyone in the organization knew what the top priority was and behaved in such a manner that supported that priority.**

That's alignment. Do you have that in your organization? It can be seen in a lot of different areas:

1. How employees are compensated
2. Strategic goals
3. How employees treat co-workers
4. How employees treat customers
5. How employees treat vendors
6. And a bunch more.....

A key to knowing if you have good alignment is independent behaviors. Meaning, what do people do when they are on their own? You don't have alignment if you always have to tell each person how they should make a decision. Running around playing mother hen by keeping everyone "close to you" or "thinking like you" is not alignment. That's one of the many flavors of micromanagement.

### **You create alignment so people have freedom.**

That's right, alignment creates freedom. It frees people up to think for themselves. They know what is important so they can decide on their own! This will free you to work on your business as opposed to working in it. How do you create alignment? Here are some key steps:

1. Have a clear and solid strategy that everyone knows
2. Assure that individual goals relate to company strategy
3. Compensate for behaviors that produce the results you measure
4. Reward innovation that supports the strategy
5. Destroy function silos and align around processes that add value to customers

None of these are easy but they are all worth the effort if you want everyone in your business pulling in the same direction you are.

*John Felkins is the owner of Accelerant Consulting Group Inc., a firm specializing in helping organizations dramatically improve. John has managed numerous multimillion dollar projects, and assists clients to quickly reach their objectives in a broad range of areas, including leadership, process improvement, strategy and organizational development.*

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