

Amping Up Team Alignment

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?When we hear the words *team alignment*, our minds are liable to jump to an image of a group of people nodding away in agreement, smiles marking their faces and cohesion sparkling in their eyes. But this image can lead us astray from what actually makes teams and organisations effective.

In the organisational space, team alignment refers to a foundational agreement on our shared purpose and how we want to get there. It doesn't necessarily mean we are in agreement all the time about everything. While our exact path forward might change – and in fact robust debate is important – we need to be working as a team when it counts and not with scattered goals, plans and ways of operating.

Anti-Alignment

We might wonder how hard it is really to attain this type of team alignment though? Surely, it's just a matter of getting everyone in a room and sharing our goals (the strategy)? In organisations, there are two major threats to this kind of

alignment which come up time and time again:

1. Prioritising individual performance goals over team and organisational ones
2. Allowing unsurfaced misalignment to derail the strategic mission

The first happens all too often with performance structures that are overly oriented towards individual performance. Rather than incentivising teamwork and achievement, these structures are more likely to lead to competition and competing priorities. Making the benefits for performance deeply linked to team and organisational outcomes, means both symbolically and practically people understand that it's a shared effort. We are less likely to get siloed and develop a scarcity-mindset around protecting our "patch". In time, we will see the broader picture – that any one of our successes is all of our success.

The second threat to alignment is when we have people who either aren't sufficiently engaged, or don't feel they have enough psychological safety, to share their counter options around strategic direction. Instead, they stay quiet. When this happens, rather than the opposing idea being discussed, examined and either accepted or refuted, it sits with that person and may lead them to act in opposition to the strategy. It results in alignment *in word* but misalignment *in deed*.

Calibrating Alignment

At a fundamental level, when we are working in teams to achieve our goals, we need alignment around team performance not individual performance. We can achieve this through building a highly effective organisational structure that supports and, indeed, encourages people to work better together.

Your organisational systems are the backbone which enables this type of alignment. Ensuring that our strategic mission is well established and well disseminated. That the way our organisation is structured and the roles we have enable us to achieve it. That our mission flows meaningfully into goals and performance metrics. That we have the communication channels to continuously reconnect us into our shared purpose.

To make these systems really come alive and get buy-in, the best way forward is through a highly engaging co-creative process. This occurs through defining together:

1. Our Team Goals and Performance Requirements

Starting from the overall organisational strategy, you can ask your team: what is our part to play? If we want to achieve this mission, what does success look like for our team? Co-creating our team goals isn't always as easy as it may seem. This is because people often have different views about how the future might unravel. Having a thorough discussion, drawing on creative thinking and surfacing diverse viewpoints, will enable you to reach the best possible outcome. Related to this is finding out how we will measure achievement of those goals. What KPIs are necessary? How are they aligned with what we are trying to achieve **together**? Connecting the dots is powerful.

2. Our Team Behaviours

Our team behaviours are the everyday activities which enable us to reach our goals. Co-creating our team behaviours can be best achieved through building what is called a [social contract](#). A social contract is an agreement about how a team commits to showing up together and interacting. It might make explicit some pre-existing norms. It might codify some areas where there is a bit of greyness around what we should be doing. Altogether it gives the team certainty and something to refer back to ensure we are behaving according to our values.

Need More Help?

Getting to real team alignment requires more work than just a one-off information session. Taking the time to work through the layers which connect us to our greater purpose and doing it in a way that involves everyone isn't always easy. But the results are well worth the time. Performance Frontiers help guide organisations to align their teams so everyone is driving towards shared purpose with passion and unity. Speak to Nikki today about how we can partner with you to build a highly effective and supportive team structure.

[Reach Out to Nikki](#)

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