

# Align Your Organization for Success with ACT™

*By Rimon W. Bitar*



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Competition is tough in every industry. Organizations must differentiate themselves in order to stand out from competitors and achieve long term success. This is accomplished by in-house alignment, consistent and open communication, maintaining complete trust in your employees, as well as consideration and reactions to your customer's needs and desires. Read on to learn how the three elements included in the Organizational Success (ACT) Model™—Alignment, Communication, and Trust, can help your organization gain the competitive advantage necessary for long term success.



## Alignment

Alignment (a-lin'ment) n. 1. Position or place in line; formation in line. 2. A straight line through two or more points. Also spelled alignment.

*In The Power of Alignment: How Great Companies Stay Centered and Accomplish Extraordinary Things* by George Labovitz and Victor Rogansky define alignment as “that optimal state in which strategy, employees, customers, and key processes work in to propel growth and profit.” Aligned organizations begin with a focused leadership and strategy in place. The strategy is communicated from the executive suite to the front line. Employees understand their role in moving the strategy forward will be accomplished by implementing specific customer focused tactics.

It is important to understand that alignment is not a static process. Alignment is an ever-changing dynamic based on a number of contributing factors such as market conditions, organizational roadblocks, and, most importantly, customer perception.

**Message:** In an aligned organization Customer Service Representatives understand that their goal is not simply to answer calls to the customer's satisfaction. They must take every opportunity to create a memorable experience by exceeding customer expectations.

For example, the customer should be advised of any volume discounts, expedited shipping choices, and/or special offers.

**Employees:** In an aligned organization Sales Associates are not only evaluated by the sales they accumulate, but by the percentage of customers that are retained over a period of time because of the Sales Associate's impact on them. They are also measured on the volume of feedback generated by customers and communicated back to management so that policies are aligned with customer's expectations.

**Customer:** In an aligned organization there is a constant effort to generate feedback from customers. To stay competitive, customers are often rewarded for responding to surveys measuring their satisfaction with products and services. This information is a valuable asset in adjusting alignment.

## Communication

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Com-mu-ni-ca-tion (ka-myoo'na-ka'shon) n. 1. The act of communicating; intercourse; exchange of ideas, conveyance of information, etc.: correspondence.

We all know that communication becomes more difficult as organizations grow. To simplify the growth process most organizations establish functional departments such as sales, accounting, and human resources. As organizations grow there is a danger that these departments become silos, i.e., entities within an organization that act independently of each other. At one end of the spectrum, departments are hesitant to share information. At the other end, departments aggressively compete with each other for recognition and rewards that have nothing to do with customers.

On-going communication of goals is the most effective way to reduce and eliminate the development of silos within an organization.

**Message:** Linkage MENA often invites the senior departmental leadership of major clients to spend three days to identify corporate goals and the contribution of each department to the achievement of those goals. During these sessions department managers not only develop plans for their own departments, but contribute to the development of other departmental goals. This cross-functional buy-in ensures that all departments are oriented in the same direction.

**Employees:** It is then the responsibility of each department manager to communicate both corporate goals (strategy) and how employees can support those goals (tactics). This communication is not a one-time activity, but the development of a framework for on-going discussions of requirements, results, and the parameters of the team's anticipated work. The agreements reached during this process should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they reflect and support the organization's goals and objectives.

**Customers:** Too often organizations concentrate their efforts on improving internal communication without customer input. While research is important, any activity where senior management comes into face-to-face contact with customers can yield important information.

## Trust

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Trust (trust) n. 1. A confident reliance on the integrity, veracity or justice of another; confidence; faith; also, the person or thing so trusted.

Shaping a culture in which group members can trust each other enough to work together is a primary leadership task. Trust creates an environment in which leaders can lead, followers can find a reason for full commitment, and both can achieve their potential.



Building trust involves demonstrating four sets of behaviors: expertise, reliability, authenticity, and good will.

Expertise is the knowledge to understand and resolve a customer's problem. It requires that each employee not only understands the organization's policies and procedures, but can convey them to customers in a positive way.

Reliability means that you keep your commitments to fellow employees and customers. A very important element of trust is the knowledge that you can rely on managers, and fellow employees to respond to your requests, and that they can rely on you.

Authenticity is a reflection of an organization's values. If there is a sense that values are unimportant or bothersome customers will perceive an organization as not being authentic.

Good Will is the feeling that an employee is willing to offer assistance and support to a customer without the expectation of a monetary reward. Good Will is often the reason why customers are loyal to an organization.

**Message:** Always be sure that your message supports the vision, mission, and goals of your organization. Be sure that the core of your message relates to the core of the organization's values. Establish commitments that move toward achieving the organization's goals, and try to make it as simple as possible.

**Employees:** In an aligned organization employees are comfortable contributing to achieving towards the organization's goals. They are also comfortable making recommendations to management that will improve the organization.

**Customers:** This is a two way relationship that needs to be built. Organizations have to do their best to have their customers trust employees, products, services, and the company as a whole. Customers also need to be trusted since the organization's vision is shaped around their needs. Building this two way trust relationship results in a credible organization that retains customers by listening to them—and acting on it.

## In a nutshell

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Competition is tough in every industry, so there is a need to differentiate and stand out as an above-board Top Notch organization. This is accomplished by in-house alignment, consistent and open communication, maintaining complete trust in your employees, as well as consideration and reactions to your customer's needs and desires.

So if you really care and want to achieve the greatest attainable success with practical, smart solutions—better ACT now!!!

# Linkage

Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

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