

# Aligning Personal Objectives to Organisational Strategy

Too often, people working in operational roles see strategy as something that doesn't affect them; they are just there to do their jobs.

But how do leaders know that everyone is working towards the same overall goals?

How do you, as a manager, make sure that everybody's contribution counts?

The answer lies in making sure there is a clear line of sight between an individual's performance objectives and the organisation's strategic plan, so that everyone can see how their contribution affects the success of an organisation.

## SMART objectives



Managing performance through personal objectives is by no means a new idea, and you may be familiar with the use of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) objectives.

However, you may not take the next step of linking objectives to organisational goals.

The effect of this is that your team members may not see the connection between their activities and the success of the organisation. The result may be that they lack commitment, or they may not work diligently.

## Man on the moon thinking

There is a well quoted story that goes, "A cleaner sweeping a floor at NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) was once asked what he did for a living."

He explained that he helped to put men on the moon.

In a 'clean' environment he realised that although his job played only a small part in the whole, it was nevertheless a necessary part and that if he failed to do it properly, others would be affected.



## Start with the strategy

The first place to start when considering personal objectives is your organisation's strategy. Does it aim to develop new products or services, or perhaps to enter new markets? Is your organisation in a climate of growth, consolidation or decline?

For example, suppose you worked for an organisation which sold smart phones and telephone services. In a mature market many people already have phones, organisations like the one you work for will need to persuade customers to upgrade their handsets and contracts regularly. Your organisation's strategy is therefore to bring new products and services to a (largely) existing market.

Your organisation's strategy should then be translated into several department goals and objectives to help the various parts of the organisation focus on their necessary contributions. Because keeping existing customers is important, all the departments in your organisation should help maintain and improve customer satisfaction.

For example:

- The IT department might have objectives to improve the technology that you use so that you can offer a wider and more reliable service than your competitors
- Your HR department might have objectives relating to training employees in giving customers great advice on the new services
- Your development department might have objectives to design and create services aimed at specific customers in your market, for example, the under 20-year-olds
- Client service teams might have objectives to improve customer service by providing a faster service with fewer errors

### Linking objectives

In this example, you might manage a team in a client services area, with responsibility for answering telephone queries from clients experiencing billing problems. Initially your team might have objectives to resolve a certain number of complaints to the customers' satisfaction, within a fixed timescale. This however does not link through to the issue or broader requirement. Taking a linked and 'Lean' view of the overall outcome, you should be aiming for a better focus e.g to contribute to 'reducing billing errors by 15% within 12 months'.



The focus of this is to improve customer service and to meet the department's overall goal and contributes to customer satisfaction and customer retention.

Your own objective should support the wider objective and might be 'to produce accurate reports on billing errors, monthly, quarterly and annually, to identify trends and improve billing efficiency'.

Then, when you set objectives for your team members, you should write them to support your own objectives as well as those of your department. So, for example, one of your team members might have an individual objective which might be 'to resolve billing errors, within two days of identifying the problem and to maintain accurate records of the nature of the problem'

### Conclusion

Consider making the link between objectives explicit, by recording in the objective which departmental and organisational targets it supports. By applying this link to all objectives, you can align everyone's performance towards the overall goal and your team members will have a clearer understanding of their contribution to the organisation's strategic objectives.



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