BRINGING ALIGNMENT BACK TO THE WORKPLACE:
A COLLABORATIVE CHANGE PROJECT

A Capstone Action Project
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Abstract

Small organizations are inherently at a disadvantage with little or no dedicated resources, especially when they are breaking new ground in a brand-new industry and have to manage around constant change. With managers and staff engaged in multiple roles, and regular shifts in goals and strategies, it becomes imperative to have a mechanism that communicates changes in strategy, aligns goals and commitments, and clearly defines ownership. The consequence of not paying attention to this can be devastating for an organization. Very quickly, managers and staff end up working on outdated initiatives that result in wasted effort and find it hard to decipher what the key initiatives are, who is responsible for them, and their level of involvement.

For this change project, I worked with an organization to help uncover issues related to company alignment and initiative ownership. Starting with a small group of stakeholders and the executive team, I conducted several anonymous surveys and follow up in-person interviews. Including the executive team to make sure they understood both the goals and scope of the project along with the survey results resulted in better project sponsorship and engagement along with a vested interest and sense of ownership. To make the change sustainable, we used an already well-established document called Core Values and Commitments (CC), which every staff reviews with their managers on a regular basis. The outcome was to create better alignment and clear visibility around company goals and strategies and to clarify levels of ownership around key initiatives that supported those goals and strategies. This led to better engagement and alignment.

action research; ethical leadership; change; communication; alignment; ownership;

Acknowledgements
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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction to Project and Evidence of Mindfulness

Purpose and Scope

I have worked at my current organization for over a dozen years, and the one constant that has kept me here is the company’s mission. The company has been in existence since the year 2000 and has focused on doing good by helping transform grants management in the local government and non-profit sector. The company’s mission is to “transform and simplify the entire grant funding process to enrich the communities our clients serve,”¹ and with every client we assist and every dollar we help funnel back to local governments, we help our clients complete major projects and provide fundamental services to their constituents.

The organization is a small business, and despite being over 17 years old, has many of the quirks of a small startup, both good and bad. In 2009 and 2010, the company underwent several changes in its ownership and management structure, and the company began a process of company alignment and employee accountability called Core Values and Commitments. At that time, the company had many new untrained managers, and management wanted a single system to unify the company around the basics -- personal accountability, productivity, and simply being a good employee. The Core Values and Commitments document was an Excel spreadsheet that stored the commitments, personal to-dos, and core values, and every quarter each and every employee led a review of the document with their supervisor providing a narrative around how they felt they did in the quarter and what support they needed to move forward. They also outlined how they did against their

¹ ecivis.com
commitments, personal to-dos, and exemplified the company’s core values. The manager also provided a narrative reflecting their thoughts and provided comments around core values, and a discussion between the employee and the supervisor would ensue.

In early 2016, the company felt it had outgrown many of the core values, which by then were six years old. I was tasked with upgrading and redesigning the Core Values and Commitments document and led a company-wide effort to generate new core values. Employees across the company provided feedback, and after numerous intense management meetings around new core values, a new document was deployed across the company enshrining a new set of core values.

Being an innovator in a brand-new industry, the company has to constantly readjust strategy on a regular basis. Department goals, initiatives, and projects shift as a result, and because the organization is a small business with limited resources, it is not uncommon for one person to perform the duties and responsibilities of multiple distinct roles. The result of this constant change however is that it quickly becomes unclear what the company is trying to accomplish, both in the short and long term, and the personal commitments of staff and their to-dos quickly become misaligned from department’s goals and company strategy. Since deploying the Core Values and Commitments document, the organization’s management team has received a lot of feedback about how the core values discussion has become much easier, but given the rapid changes in company direction, the commitments discussion has become more and more difficult. This has been further exacerbated by a new sense of urgency in the marketplace which resulted in the executive team focusing on penetrating a new much larger market and as a result, communication downstream around changing strategies and goals faltered. Since there
was no formal mechanism to drive this communication across the company on a regular basis, it led to increasing work dissatisfaction amongst employees since they were unable to see how their efforts were making a difference, nor could they see how commitments were connected to the broader company strategy.

The change project sought to re-engage employees with the company strategy through initiatives that bring clarity and transparency to commitments. Specifically, I thought my research could uncover ways to improve or change the following: 1) lack of alignment and cohesion, both in leaders and in staff in how to communicate to achieve common goals, and 2) lack of work satisfaction. These had been concerns staff had brought up to management over several years, and a topic of conversation in exit interviews. Some of the anticipated outcomes of this research would be to: 1) improve communication between stakeholders around strategy and commitments, 2) bring clarity around roles, responsibilities and project ownership, and 3) increase employee engagement and satisfaction. Hopefully, this will lead to lower turnover as well, but that is not measurable in the time frame allotted to the project.

The project entailed working with six stakeholders inside the organization which included both managers and staff along with members of the executive team to discuss the topics of strategy, alignment, cohesion, work satisfaction and communication. The same group was also involved in narrowing the scope of the project down to two initiatives that could be accomplished in the final quarter of the year before the end of the final school term. Including the executive team was by design, as they needed to be internal sponsors for the project and needed to support and understand the scope of the project and feel personally involved in supporting both the process and the outcomes.
The implementation of the project involved performing a company-wide survey to gauge where employees are at in terms of their understanding of the issues that have been presented in the project. The goal was to set a baseline before the project and measure changes after to see whether or not the project was successful. The second step involved execution of the methods defined in Chapter 3. The third step involved training the executive team and managers in how to manage the new information and handle conversations around it. Clear communication around how the information could be interpreted and what outcomes were expected were clearly defined. Next, company-wide trainings were also held to introduce everyone to the new pieces of information and set expectations. And finally, after all the changes and training, a company-wide exit survey was sent to see if many of the issues identified earlier had been alleviated through the means undertaken in the project.

Guiding Values and Project Significance

The hallmark of good leadership is clear communication⁷, and communication implies understanding. A good communicator knows how to present information in a manner which would be received well by the recipient. The task of communication becomes increasingly complicated as it passes through layers of an organization, and if communication is stunted or not well thought out, this can lead to increasing frustration and dissatisfaction throughout the organization.

The job of communicating strategy also presents its own set of unique challenges. While the top layer of an organization may be responsible for setting big goals, and outlining strategies to achieve those goals, what is often forgotten is that the job then becomes communicating those goals and strategies through each layer in the organization. Too often, this job becomes an afterthought and strategy ends up communicated via informal means such as casual conversations, or by simply sending emails, or holding townhalls, but that is where the communication falters.

The reason I am involved is because I want the organization to succeed since its mission is aligned with my own core values. Since I graduated college, I have only wanted to work in organizations that are making a difference in the world and are engaged in doing good. While I am constantly recruited on a weekly basis by headhunters looking to fill position in Fortune 500 companies, I have constantly rejected them simply on this basis. I do not want to work for an organization where profit is the key driver, nor do I want to work in an organization where I am just another employee among thousands. Bringing realignment back to the organization through better communication will help the organization fulfill its mission, and that is where the problem statement and my values intersect. The gap in current capability and future possibility serves as an energizing force to go above and beyond and do good.

Specifically, though, in relation to this action project, there were two key core values that served as the impetus for this change project, and they are ones I helped define for the company as well. Over the past several years, I had been taking on more and more responsibilities inside the organization. Late last year, the organization’s executives met and started outlining some goals for the organization in 2017. One of the goals was to have better communication
throughout the organization, along with other goals such as new product initiatives that could possibly transform both the organization and the market forever. Late last year, the company was possibly going to lose a major account, and towards the beginning of this year, the organization hired a new Chief Operating Officer who was also an expert in the sector we were trying to penetrate, and as a result the company focused largely on the company’s product goals with execution being the mantra, but this came at the cost of the communication goals which were not given their fair due attention. It became clear that somebody had to raise the level of communication inside the organization, and since I had originally proposed a framework for communication in 2016 that was accepted by the executive team, I set out to take personal ownership over this goal. The two core values that guided me are referred to as “Extra Mile” and “Version 2.0”. Extra Mile is a core value in the organization that stresses breaking out of molds, and a willingness to go above and beyond one’s typical duties or job description. Formally, we define it as “Beyond working hard or working smart, you demonstrate a willingness to do any job, great or small, to ensure the continued success of the company.” I knew that despite the load on my shoulders, the communication goal was critical to the success of the company. The second core value, “Version 2.0”, has to do with personally learning and growth, and it is formally defined as “You are coachable and driven to continually improve yourself and your role, and seek opportunities to create efficiencies and improve effectiveness of the organization.” I knew that taking on a role like this would require me to dive deep into research, seek out best practices, and adapt them to our organization to help improve communication and create alignment.

The change project is needed because the organization is suffering from the repercussions of miscommunication. Managers generally think they understand what the goals are for the year,
but my survey of the initial stakeholders showed widely varying results. There has been frustration amongst the executive team that some staff are “not focused on the right things,” but I saw that as a symptom of a larger problem. There is also growing frustration inside the organization when people are not sure the work they are doing is contributing to a larger goal. While addressing the gap is a much larger effort than this project timeline would allow for, there are certainly some concrete steps that could be undertaken that could help address the gap. The initial research has uncovered seven distinct areas, as outlined in Chapter 3, where the stakeholders feel someone could help the organization, and together we have picked the top two, and in the coming year will be addressing the remaining items.

Record of Initial Mindfulness

Mindfulness played a big part in the change project. Mindfulness can be defined as “maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehearsing the past or imagining the future.” Mindfulness requires that person becomes conscious of the baggage, prejudices or preconceived notions one may be holding during any interaction, with the key being not to separate one from one’s thoughts, but rather to acknowledge those thoughts and avoid judgement. Being conscious of this, I initially wanted to work with a new organization

3 “Mindfulness | Definition,” Greater Good, greatergood.berkeley.edu/mindfulness/definition.
because I knew there would be two key challenges to being mindful for a change project, the first being familiarity with the organization and its issues, and the second being familiarity with all the people involved. Since I ended up working within my organization, however, to be effective mindfulness had to be front and center at each point in the change project, and with each interaction.

At the start of the change project, I refrained from personally selecting all of the stakeholders, and asked a group of managers to nominate people who had both the time and the interest in providing feedback. Selecting people I had established working relationships with would have led to groupthink or other hidden biases, and the key to mindfulness is interacting with people, who may or may not challenge your thinking, while leaving judgement behind and clearly one of the goals of the change project was the infusion of fresh perspectives.

As I designed the surveys and met with stakeholders in-person, I employed additional mindful approaches. As I formulated questions, they were not pointed at specific issues but were rather broad open-ended questions such that I left behind any sense of what my opinions were or how I viewed the problem. In my in-person interviews, I asked a lot of “Why” questions which put the interviewee in the driver seat and forced them to see various possibilities and dig deep to offer their own opinions. Another mindfulness technique I employed was paying “full attention”, and I made sure not to have distractions near me, like my cell phone, and made sure to give each interaction its full due and constantly acknowledged how important the interaction is. And finally, I also employed “beginner’s mind”, which is essentially a technique to apply curiosity and excitement to a problem regardless of the outcome, and come at it with a fresh perspective.

Mindfulness has some interesting roots. To the contrary of popular opinion, mindfulness
can be traced back to Hinduism, well before Buddha stepped down from the Himalayas into eastern India. Historians have looked and found that before Buddha, the “... Hindus practiced a range of meditations, some of which involved mindfulness.”⁴ That being said, mindfulness itself is not exclusive to any one religion or tradition. “The history of mindfulness can be traced back throughout religion and the historical practice of mindfulness has been found in all over the world.”⁵ In recent times, it was Jon Kabat-Zinn, a Medical Professor and creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Massachusetts, who took a scientific lens on Buddhist mindfulness and studied it. “Kabat-Zinn believed that many of the secular people who could most benefit from meditation were being turned off by the whiffs of reincarnation and other religious esoterica that clung to it. So he devised a new and pleasing definition of ‘mindfulness,’ one that now makes no mention of enlightenment: ‘The awareness that arises through paying attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.’”⁶

Kabat-Zinn’s research focused on the role that meditation played on emotion regulation, and as more research was conducted it soon became focused on the awareness of the thought and metacognition. In this action project, I have used various modern forms of mindfulness to remove biases, emotional baggage, and reserve judgement, increase curiosity, empathy, and compassion, give full due attention, and increase my awareness in the hopes that this will reduce a significant stress burden on me, lead to better stakeholder engagement, and open up hidden possibilities that would have been otherwise closed without a mindfulness approach.

⁵ Ibid.
Limitations

Action research projects in general are limited in their scope and effect. They are projects based on general research and the implementation of change is essentially a pilot study to see whether the change project produces the outcomes outlined in the project charter. They often require adjustment, and so while this project has to be implemented with ten weeks, the project on a much broader scale with continue on. The feedback received during the interview process has uncovered several related issues and they cannot be addressed in the time limit.

Definitions of Terms

1. Bayesian Game Theory - a game in which players have incomplete information, but are assisted by beliefs and probabilities

2. Collaboration - two or more people working together through idea sharing and thinking to accomplish a common goal.

3. Core Values and Commitments - the organization’s mechanism for managing commitments and values inside the organization.

4. Goal Setting Theory - “In the late 1960s, [Edwin] Locke's pioneering research into goal setting and motivation gave us our modern understanding of goal setting.” His research showed that employee motivation is impacted by clear goals and appropriate feedback. Specifically, it was proven that having a goal not only provided a lot of motivation but also improved performance, and that as the goal becomes more difficult and specific, employees work harder to achieve it.

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5. Motivation - level of desire employees feel to perform.

6. Organizational Communication - communication about the organization used to create a competitive advantage. It usually covers information about what the organization stands for, why the organization exists, what the target market is and who its customers typically are. It is meant to unify the organization and bring clarity.

7. RASCI - RASCI (see what the acronym stands for below) is simply a matrix or spreadsheet used to convey areas of responsibility and levels of involvement in an organization.
   a. R - Responsible - who is responsible for carrying out the entrusted task?
   b. A - Accountable (also Approver) - who is responsible for the whole task and who is responsible for what has been done?
   c. S - Support - who provides support during the implementation of the activity / process / service?
   d. C - Consulted - who can provide valuable advice or consultation for the task?
   e. I - Informed - who should be informed about the task progress or the decisions in the task?

8. Strategy - long term plan to achieve an organization’s goal.
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review and Initial Stakeholder Dialogue

Introduction to Literature Review

The major question I tried to answer through the literature review process was around creating alignment through communication regarding strategy and reducing work dissatisfaction and increasing engagement related to either a lack of communication or miscommunication. I also looked at how roles and responsibilities inside the organization can be communicated to bring clarity around ownership to reduce work dissatisfaction and miscommunication as well.

The literature was searched on Claremont Lincoln University Library’s online database to find articles, books, journals and newspapers. I also utilized Google and Google Scholar to find relevant material in scholarly literature as well as business-related websites. The search terms varied but generally revolved around using the key terms: strategy, communication, work satisfaction, engagement, roles, RASCI, ownership. The searches lasted through most of 2017.

The literature review will cover the themes of strategy and communication and will illustrate how the understanding of strategy has changed over the years and how execution remains elusive to most organizations. Research will show that the underlying link between strategy and execution is effective communication and coordination and less about work effort, the typical culprit managers tend to point to.

Past Perspectives

The topics of communicating strategy, increasing clarity around roles and responsibilities, reducing work dissatisfaction and increasing work engagement have all changed quite a bit in the
past fifty years. Corporations took strategy development from the military after World War II and adopted the top-down approach of the military as well. Take, for example, General Motors, which after World War II, was designed from the top-down based on hierarchical military organizations. “Orders flowed downwards and your rank determined your responsibility. Perhaps not surprisingly, business strategy started to look more like military planning, with thick books filled with reams of market intelligence, tactics and procedures. Middle management’s primary function was to ‘execute the plan’ and compensation reflected performance against predetermined objectives.”\(^8\) The process didn’t change much for 30 years until the 1980s, when Jack Welch, then CEO of General Electric, dismissed the strategic planning process because he did not feel it “improved how the company performed.”\(^9\)

The topic of increasing work engagement also has a similar history. In post-war America, the science of behaviorism was in fad, and studying engagement or motivation was not considered a respectable science because it was not easy to measure a matter of the subconscious. Strategy was all about beating the competition and the focus was all outward rather than inward. If people were a discussion point, then it was all about productivity metrics, and behavior was studied as a means of increasing productivity. Again, by the 1980s, the tide had started to turn as the American automobile industry started to lose business to its German and Japanese counterparts. The focus then turned inward, as American manufacturers started looking to increase quality, lower costs and improve process efficiencies. As a result, theories like goal-setting theory gained legitimacy linking motivation to task performance.


\(^9\) Ibid.
Current Perspectives

In 1996, Michael Porter, a professor at Harvard Business School, wrote an article for *Harvard Business Review* entitled “What is Strategy?” that breathed new life into business strategy and dismissed old ways of looking at the topic. This marked a turning point in the discussion around strategy, and Porter argued that focusing inward, something each and every organization was doing in response to competition in a globalized world, was not really a strategy but rather simply “operational efficiencies”\(^{10}\) that helped a company stay relevant, and that strategy had really been neglected by corporations. Porter approach to strategy is something most corporations now consider a science close to marketing and helps answer questions similar to these: what makes us different than our competitors, how do we position ourselves in the marketplace, what choices and trade-offs must be made and how will the organization be aligned around these choices.

In 2015, Donald Sull, a lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management, wrote an article for *Harvard Business Review* entitled “Why Strategy Execution Unravels - and What to Do About It” in which argued that with Michael Porter’s work “we have had a clear and widely accepted definition of what strategy is—but we know a lot less about translating a strategy into results. Books and articles on strategy outnumber those on execution by an order of magnitude. And what little has been written on execution tends to focus on tactics or generalize from a single case. So what do we know about strategy execution?”\(^{11}\) Sull’s key findings, after surveying more than 8000 managers, was that executives misunderstand both where and why


strategy fails and his research concluded that “executives attribute poor execution to a lack of alignment and a weak performance culture. It turns out, though, that in most businesses activities line up well with strategic goals, and the people who meet their numbers are consistently rewarded.”\textsuperscript{12} Sull’s recommendation however was that “to execute their strategies, companies must foster coordination across units and build the agility to adapt to changing market conditions,”\textsuperscript{13} in other words, that the problem of strategy execution lay one layer above and poor strategy execution was more closely linked to poor communication and coordination across the organization, and was also linked to the business’ ability to quickly respond to changes in the marketplace.

In 2002, Edwin Locke and Gary Latham, professors at the University of Maryland and Toronto respectively, published a major meta-study in American Psychologist entitled “Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation - A 35-year odyssey” which looked at and summarized 35 years of empirical research on goal-setting theory. Locke himself was the progenitor of the goal-setting theory of motivation that linked goal-setting to task performance, and the theory argued that “specific and challenging goals along with appropriate feedback contribute to higher and better task performance. In simple words, goals indicate and give direction to an employee about what needs to be done and how much efforts are required to be put in.”\textsuperscript{14} It was clear that there was a link between clear goals and performance, and when an employee does not understand what his goals are, his performance and work satisfaction suffer. In their meta-study, the authors had several core findings, such as “task difficulty, measured as

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
probability of task success, was related to performance in a curvilinear, inverse function. The highest level of effort occurred when the task was moderately difficult, and the lowest levels occurred when the task was either very easy or very hard.”\textsuperscript{15} Another core finding was found when he “compared the effect of specific, difficult goals to a commonly used exhortation in organizational settings, namely, to do one’s best. We found that specific, difficult goals consistently led to higher performance than urging people to do their best.”\textsuperscript{16}

Perhaps the best and most conclusive research was on the understanding of goals and the link to performance and engagement. They wrote that “goals affect performance through four mechanisms”\textsuperscript{17}: 1) goals help define directive and focus attention and effort toward “goal-relevant activities and away from goal-irrelevant activities,” and 2) goals create energy and “high goals lead to greater effort than low goals,” and 3) goals enabled persistence and “when participants are allowed to control the time they spend on a task, hard goals prolong effort,” and 4) “goals affect action indirectly by leading to the arousal, discovery, and/or use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies.”\textsuperscript{18}

Equally fascinating is the link between goal-setting and satisfaction. “Goals are, at the same time, an object or outcome to aim for and a standard for judging satisfaction. To say that one is trying to attain a goal of X means that one will not be satisfied unless one attains X. Thus, goals serve as the inflection point or reference standard for satisfaction versus dissatisfaction (Mento, Locke, & Klein, 1992). For any given trial, exceeding the goal provides increasing


\textsuperscript{16} ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} ibid.
satisfaction as the positive discrepancy grows, and not reaching the goal creates increasing
dissatisfaction as the negative discrepancy grows. Across trials, the more goal successes one has,
the higher one’s total satisfaction.”

Future Perspectives

While it may be difficult to predict the future, it has become clear that there will be a lot more research in the area of execution. As Donald Sull points out, the area of execution of strategy is sorely lacking research. Furthermore, as globalization and competition increase, strategy will become less a matter of long-term planning, and more about short-term planning, communication strategies, and agile organization design to help the organization respond to constant rapid change.

Another realization businesses are coming to is that the pace of change is only increasing, and the time required to respond to change, whether it is new competition or changes in consumer preferences, is never going to be long enough to study in full detail. In other words, the new reality is that there will never be enough time to do a full thorough analysis of any problem set, and you need to deal with uncertainty and work in probabilities. As a consequence, organizations have turned to Bayesian game theory and this will play an increasingly larger part in strategy discussions in the future. Bayesian theory is formally defined as “being, relating to, or involving statistical methods that assign probabilities or distributions to events (such as rain tomorrow) or parameters (such as a population mean) based on experience or best guesses before

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experimentation and data collection and that apply Bayes’ theorem to revise the probabilities and distributions after obtaining experimental data.” In other words, strategy development will become a function of probabilities, with a focus on designing systems for real-time performance feedback and adjustment.

We have already seen the impact of all this on the technology sector. Technology that enables the ingestion and storage of massive amounts of data, referred to as “big data”, and the technology to rapidly analyze that data to detect trends and make informed decisions, referred to generally as business intelligence and analytics are booming. It is only a matter of time before new tools to help facilitate communication around strategy are introduced into the marketplace. Future-thinking CEOs have already begun using new social media platforms to deliver their messages and inspire their employees. More and more leaders are using storytelling techniques and backing up their messages with videos and other collateral to drive home the message.

Stakeholder Perspectives

While the literature lays out a connection between strategy, communication, execution, performance, and satisfaction, the stakeholders in the organization were more focused on the fundamentals: what are the goals of the organization, what strategies are we employing to meet those goals, how are each business unit’s plans or commitments linked to those strategies, how will I personally execute against those commitments (and do I have a say in that), and what results or outcomes will be judged to measure success. These recurring themes came up in

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conversations with executives, managers and staff members on numerous occasions during the initial surveys and in-person interviews. Along with those themes, the stakeholders would like to make sure there is clarity around roles and responsibilities across the organization, a mechanism to communicate changes in strategy, and for managers a clear idea how they can increase work satisfaction through all this communication and clarity.

Conclusion

The literature suggests that while strategy has matured as a science over the years and has become more inclusive in its nature, there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of execution, coordination, and communication. The definition of what is a strategy has changed significantly over the past several decades, yet the issue of execution still remains. Research shows that issue with execution is not what managers believe it to be, namely the completion of the plans related to those strategies. Rather, research shows that the issues surrounding of execution are largely a function of bad communication: rapid and meaningful communication that helps the organization deal with changes in strategy due to changes in the marketplace, and communication and coordination among various business units that help respond to the changes and work together to achieve accomplish specific goals.

The issue is further exacerbated when strategy becomes unclear or miscommunicated through the organization. Personal commitments or goals then become unlinked from that strategy, and this affects alignment as people or whole units work on tasks or plans that are not beneficial to the organization, or do not “move the needle.” As coordination between business units suffer, ownership over specific tasks or projects becomes unclear and leads to further
frustration, miscommunication, and resentment. And finally, work satisfaction suffers because members of the organization do not feel their work output is being recognized because it is not linked to a much larger strategy, and the lack of communication and miscommunication makes the organization seem like it does not seem like it knows what it is doing. This is especially frustrating in a mission-driven organization out to do good in the marketplace.
CHAPTER 3 - Methods Determined with Stakeholders

Project Goal Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

Appendix B contains a record of collaboration between myself, the stakeholders, and the executive team in the organization. To determine the scope and goal of the action project, I engaged the stakeholders in a survey meant to uncover areas where there may be a lack of cohesion and misalignment with the organization’s strategic goals and areas of miscommunication that have led to a lack of work satisfaction. The first survey uncovered several pieces of critical feedback, and many stakeholders were exceptionally forthright with their comments.

Two stakeholders who provided the most detailed feedback, above and beyond what the others had done, were selected for further in-person interviews. I employed several dialogue techniques to dig deeper into problem areas, ask why certain statements were made, and get important clarifications and context. I utilized an Appreciative Inquiry approach to make the engagement a positive one focused on possibilities and not on constraint and limitations, or a discussion on what had happened in the past. What became clear is that there were seven recurring themes or problem areas, which I restated as goals.

The seven goals identified in the first two rounds of interactions, shown in the table below, helped expose some serious fault lines in the organization in terms of communication, clarity and alignment. As a result, a second survey was put together with three clear goals: 1) to gather consensus around the identified goals, 2) to pick the top two goals which could be addressed in
the timeline of the project, and 3) to discuss methods for implementing possible solutions and measurements for outcomes to determine whether the change project was successful or not. An important point in the discussion of methods was the issue of sustainability and that possible solutions needed to be not only successful, but also repeatable and that they needed become adopted by the organization for the long term. After getting the survey results back, I also met with the executive team to share the results and gather their feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RASCI</td>
<td>Implement and Publish a RASCI Chart for key roles in the company, and for key projects / initiatives as well. The hope would be to clarify who is Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, and Informed. This helps clarify roles and responsibilities, and helps alleviate scope creep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP COACH</td>
<td>Implement a formal up-coaching system. While people can enter areas where they need support from their supervisors in their Core Values and Commitments document, create a parallel survey that HR will receive and help ensure for anonymity. The feedback can be aggregated and generalized so that HR can help provide feedback to managers individually, or pick up on trends for the whole team to work on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAT</td>
<td>Communication from managers, especially those who wear multiple &quot;hats&quot; can be confusing for people. Am I getting this feedback as a colleague, as a supervisor, as an executive, or as a project lead? Am I supposed to hear you out, take action, or coordinate some feedback? The lines have been blurred and it leads to miscommunication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARING</td>
<td>Implement more informal brown bag lunch sessions for various managers and project leads to share what they are working on, or different things they are hearing about that people should know about. Help break down silos, and disseminate information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREER</td>
<td>Implement a more formal career path conversation as part of the Core Values and Commitments document. Where do you see yourself in 1, 2, or 3 years, what would you need to get there, how does that help the company, and how can the company help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGY</td>
<td>Disseminate strategic company goals to a broader audience, and tie Core Values and Commitments document to those goals. A visual representation should show how my goals tie into my supervisor's goals, which should tie into</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the company's goals. Also, would show how teams working together share a goal.

| PROJECT MGMT | Use a more formal project management tool for initiatives to track company initiatives and progress. Email is not the best communication tool, nor is Instant Messaging. Get everyone trained and adopting a single system for the sake of transparency and efficiency. This would also help ensure feedback can be formally solicited and deadlines understood across the organization. |

Table 1

The top two priorities agreed upon by the stakeholders and the executive team were Strategy and RASCI.

Project Methods Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

Two key methods were identified based on the feedback received from stakeholders. First, they asked that some sort of formality be used to deploy the changes. In other words, they wanted the change to come from the top, be formal in nature, and come with formal training. As a corollary, they did not want the change viewed as a part of the Master’s project, or some sort of experiment, but an official directive on behalf of the company that warranted everyone’s full undivided attention. Second, they wanted this to seem like an extension or enhancement of an existing process, not a new process being handed down from the executive team.

Both comments had a lot of hidden wisdom in them and also addressed the question of sustainability at the same time. Given that many employees are focused on tasks at hand, or wearing multiple hats, there is very little time or room for a side project unless it is formal initiative that comes down from the executive team and mandated to all. At the same time, like many initiatives, it will not be sustainable if staff have to learn a new process or use new tools to
improve communication and get better aligned. In other words, while staff may understand the
gravity of the problems being addressed, they will not adopt a new system or process unless it
supplements what they may already have been trained on and involved in. In other words, the
change must be as “easy” as possible.

Fortunately, the company had a mechanism that fostered communication between
managers and staff, was well adopted across the organization, and could be augmented to address
the issues identified in this change project. The agreed upon methods focused on changing the
Core Values and Commitments document to do the following:

1. Add a worksheet to the Core Values and Commitments document that listed out
   the key strategies and goals for the year. This section would need to be updated on
   a regular basis and would serve as a dashboard to rally the company around.

2. Add a worksheet to the Core Values and Commitments document to include an
   organizational chart that listed each employee's commitments in an effort to bring
   transparency. Also, this would expose the links between each layer of the
   organization, so that an employee could see the links between their commitments,
   their manager’s commitments, the executive team’s commitments, and so on.
   Discussions around how that tied to overall company strategy and mission could
   also be facilitated through this transparency.

3. Add a worksheet to the Core Values and Commitments document to include a list
   of key initiatives with a RASCI Responsibility Matrix that brought clarity around
   the initiatives as well as identified who was Responsible, Accountable,
   Supportive, (to be) Consulted, and (to be) Informed. Since people are wearing so
many proverbial “hats”, this would help clarify who is in charge of or involved in which initiative and help illustrate if someone is either too involved or under involved in various initiatives.

The next step involved training the executive team and managers in how to manage the new information and handle conversation around it. As part of the exercise, managers were energized with the template I introduced for deploying company strategy communication, and immediately sought to get involved in defining their portions. This involved over half a dozen meetings, and not only did I get more buy-in as a result of the process, but it also presented an opportunity to train the managers in how to communicate the new changes as well. Finally, company-wide training was also held to introduce everyone to the new changes to their Core Values and Commitments and set expectations.

Project Measurements Determined by Researcher and Stakeholders

Given the timeline of the project, the best way to gauge success of the project was through surveys. The goal was to set benchmarks, before and after company-wide training, that helped illustrate the level of understanding of the company’s strategy and how employees felt they fit into key initiatives. And finally, after implementing the changes and conducting the training, a second company-wide exit survey was sent to see if many of the issues identified earlier had been alleviated through the means undertaken in the project and finalize outcomes. Appendix C contains the two questionnaires send before and after implementing the changes and conducting the training that helped illustrate the changes in the organization. The next chapter also contains specifics around the types of questions that were asked in the questionnaires.
CHAPTER 4 - Results: Evidence of Change through Project Implementation

Actions Taken by Researcher and Stakeholders

In order to address the issues identified through surveys and interviews, the stakeholders and executives agreed to leverage the Core Values and Commitments document, an existing means of communication between employees and their managers, and implement three key changes to the document.

The first change would be to add a new worksheet to the Core Values and Commitments document called “Direction,” which would unite the company around strategy. It was clear from the initial company-wide pre-implementation survey that a vast majority of the organization did not know and could not relate the company’s strategy for the year, or misunderstood what strategy meant in the broader context and instead ended up mistaking strategy for tactical concerns or company themes. To unite the company around what it is trying to accomplish on an annual basis, it was important to have a framework that was simple enough for every employee to understand, yet had the necessary elements and level of detail for managers to take ownership over the document and be able to connect the dots from company direction to each employee’s personal commitments.

One of the internal findings that came up in conversations around sustainability was that it was not only important for the organization to have a means of publishing and communicating strategy, and changes that come along the way, but that it needed to be owned by the middle management so that they could speak to it with conviction, and it could become a regular part of their Core Values and Commitments follow ups with staff. This led to several rounds of meetings
to define company strategy for the coming year, and the intense discussion and collaboration amongst middle managers and members of the executive turned out to be a benefit of producing the document.

Appendix D has a copy of the template I created to help facilitate the communication of company direction and strategy. The first challenge was to ensure that definitions were in place, and that all employees had a common vocabulary to communicate company strategy. The word “strategy” itself can be confusing for many folks, as was evidenced in the survey results, and so the worksheet itself was named “Direction” to give a clear indication that the whole worksheet was all about the company’s direction, and strategy is just a portion of that equation. The worksheet itself was broken into eight different sections and was meant to both go from broad ideas and concepts to specifics, and connect the dot from activities back to results and outcomes.

Below is an explanation of the eight layers inside the Direction Worksheet.

1. Mission - this layer is owned jointly by the Board and Executives, meaning they have input to change this, if necessary. This layer is meant to answer the question: “Why are we here? What is our reason for existing?” The value for this layer is the organization’s mission statement, and having this at the top meant all planning clearly lined up to accomplishing the mission of the organization.

2. Objectives - this layer is owned by the executive team. This layer is meant to answer the question: “What do we wish to achieve (broad scope)?” The values for this layer are broad statements like “Increase Revenue” or “Increase Profitability” that executives and managers could all agree upon without having to worry about specifics. Again, the idea was to begin at a very broad level, and get more specific
with each additional layer.

3. Goals - this layer is owned by the executive team. This layer is described as “Objectives (Layer 2) expressed in measurable terms (backed by reasoning and evidence).” The values for this layer may be statements like “Increase Revenue by X percent to exceed industry standard” or “Increase Profitability to X percentage because of …”

4. Strategies - this layer is owned jointly by executive and management teams. This later is meant to answer the question: “What must we to achieve goals and objectives, and why?” This is a layer where all managers are involved, and they must collaborate to describe specific strategies that help meet each objective and goal above it. This layer also helps facilitate conversation between departments to help determine impacts and areas of collaboration. This layer is not meant to be at the level of specificity that it describe day to day activities, but should be at a sufficient level of detail that it describes how the objectives and goals will be met with agreement from the whole management team.

5. Plans / Tactics / Logistics - this layer is owned jointly by management and executive teams. This layer is meant to answer the questions: “How shall we do it, and by when? Are there constraints or dependencies?” This layer is owned first by the management team because it is up to each manager to work with their teams to describe specific activities and timelines to meet each relevant strategy, and to outline what limitations or connections may exist between them. This helps the organization also plan out timelines, cost plans, quarterly goals, among other
things. Each staff member’s personal commitments may be tied to line items in this layer, and they can clear draw a line from their day to day duties to impact in this area and up the various layers.

6. Operations - this layer is owned jointly by executive and management teams. This layer is meant to clarify ownership and link to the RASCI chart in the Ownership worksheet, and also outline metrics and reporting. It also clarifies to whom those metrics must be reported, and on what timeline.

7. Results - this layer is owned jointly by executive and management teams. This layer takes operations a step further, to answer how the outputs from the plans, tactics, and logistics, along with the strategies they are linked to, are producing the necessary results in relation to the goals. This layer also describes how those judgements are made and how often.

8. Outcomes - this layer is owned by the executive team. While most organizations may stop at results, mission oriented organizations need to perform impact assessments each year. They must be able to answer the question: “What do the results mean (to the company, the industry, the market), and why?” The items in this area link the outcomes or impacts back to the mission.

The second change to the Core Values and Commitments document is a Commitments Chart worksheet. Appendix D contains an obfuscated copy of the worksheet. The goal of this worksheet is linked to key goals identified in the interview and survey process. First, it helps provide complete transparency by opening up and listing every staff member’s personal commitments, and it also shows each manager’s commitments as well. Through reviewing the
worksheet, each staff member should be able to draw a line from their personal commitments to their manager’s commitments back to the Direction worksheet to see how their day to day duties tie back to the broader company direction and strategy. In an effort to facilitate this process the worksheet is divided into two parts - the first part has a full organizational chart showing every member inside the organization. Each person is “clickable” and are linked down to a list of commitments for that staff member, assembled in the second part of the worksheet.

The final change to the Core Values and Commitments document is an Ownership worksheet. Appendix D contains an obfuscated copy of the worksheet. The goal of this worksheet is linked to survey results, where stakeholders complained repeatedly about not knowing what the key initiatives inside the organization are, let alone who owns them. This confusion is further exacerbated by the fact that numerous members of the organization fulfill multiple roles, and it becomes unclear who owns what portion of what initiative, and to what level. The worksheet contains a RASCI chart of the key initiatives inside the organization, and will be further linked to the Plans, Tactics, and Logistics area and the Operations area so staff members can identify who is leading which area of the overall strategy. One of the other goals of this worksheet is also to identify staff members who have too much on their plates, and for those staff members who wish to add items or help with other initiatives, to have a clear understanding who they should speak to.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the changes, and given the short timeline of the project, the stakeholders agreed to a company-wide pre-implementation survey to establish a baseline of understanding around ideas of strategy, communication, and ownership. During a company-wide All Hands Meetings, I conducted a training session which covered the capstone
project, the challenges uncovered while working the stakeholders, the changes implemented in
the Core Values and Commitments document, and the reasons that tie all this together.
Afterwards, I conducted a company-wide post-implementation survey to measure if respondents
understood and could validate that the changes would help alleviate many of the communication
concerns, and whether they felt more or less engaged as a result.

Measurements of Results

Pre-Implementation Questionnaire

The Pre-Implementation Questionnaire is available in Appendix C. It this first
company-wide survey, I asked respondents to rank how well they felt they understood the
company’s strategy for 2017, and to describe in their own words what that might me.

There was a wide spread when it came to responses on the first question. Many felt
Satisfactory, and others Very Good, but there were others who felt Poor, Fair and Excellent.
To validate whether this was based on a correct frame of reference, the respondents were asked to describe the company strategy for 2017. Some of the responses were:

- Obtain more revenue.
- Provide excellent customer service in order to achieve raving fans.
- I do not know what the company's 2017 Strategic Goals are.
- Make more money, grow the company and our saturation of the market
- Company’s goal is to be the leader in the field.
- Our core values.
- I believe it's raving fans, along with improving client renewal and increasing ACV. But honestly, I am not sure.
- I searched for "strategic goals" on the company intranet and did not find them. I’d bet they are related to profitability and market share. Perhaps some customer satisfaction and product innovation, too. I don't know whether we're trending up or down.

Some of what I understood from the results was:

- Respondents did not understand the term “strategy” or confused it with high-level narratives, our mission statement, themes (such as Raving Fan), or their tactical department goals
- Respondents simply did not know
- Even if they did not know, there were no means to find out in written form

The respondents were then asked if they understood how their role contributed to the company’s mission and vision, and they were generally more optimistic.
When asked how their role contributed to the company’s mission and vision, people listed their tactical duties overall. There was little to connect it to any of what they listed as strategy above. Some of the responses were:

- My role in the pre-award stage is obvious. I have no role in the post-award stage.
- We find the information for our clients to help the grants community.
- I help summarize funding opportunities so that clients can more efficiently gauge which funding opportunities they should devote their resources to.
- Closing business and forecasting when that business will close.
- I am responsible for contributing to the database.
- As an editor, my role is to ensure that the programs I publish are of the highest quality and accuracy for our clients.
- Provide our clients with an excellent on-boarding and implementation experience that is easy and simple for them and allows them to realize their goals. Provide our clients with rapid, reactive support and provide them with solutions so that they can get back to serving their communities.
- Raving fans want to be able to access services and have them function as expected. Beyond that, I don't have any evidence that my work influences what may well turn out to be our mission and vision.

In the same way, respondents were generally positive their supervisor understood how they were contributing, and they understood how their supervisor was also contributing, however it seems this was also very tactical oriented as well.
In the survey, the respondents were asked if they had a clear understand of key projects and initiatives inside the company. Results were mixed, although half the respondents tended to agree.

I also asked if they understood who leads and owns those initiatives. Results were similar.

Given the previous results, the respondents were being overly optimistic, or simply feeling they knew what was going on. This set of results contradicted my survey and interview feedback, which led me to believe:

1. Managers generally have confusion around ownership and roles (especially since they were many hats)
2. The rest of the company does not know what they do not know, and more information sharing will shed light on this.

Finally, some of the responded added notes:

- I do not have a clear understanding of what other departments are doing. I feel like I have a very clear understanding of my role in the pre-award stage. But I feel like I barely understand what's going on with the post-award stuff. Outside of my department, I do not think I have a good grasp of what's going on.
- Less is more. Pick a few key points and emphasize those. Sometimes I do feel that everyone here gives too much info and the core of what matters gets lost! I hate to use the phrase "talking points" but short, poignant messages are better than monologues. Keep it to the point. I do believe the company has excellent staff committed to the goals, but it just needs a crisper presentation.
- It's helpful to get a monthly aural update from other departments. I think our real challenge is defining how success is measured and demonstrating efficacy.

**Post-Implementation Questionnaire**

After the Core Values and Commitments document changes were introduced, I conducted a second survey to measure if it had the intended impact. Respondents were asked to rate whether, with the new changes in the document, if they will be better informed about the company’s direction. There was a majority in Agree and Strongly Agree.

![Survey Results](image)

Respondents were then asked, in their own words, to describe how their understanding around how strategic goals are developed has improved. This was important because it involved
making sure everyone was on the same page in terms of process and definitions. Some of the responses were:

- The meeting has clarified answers to my questions, but I'll need to see changes in my actual document first before I determine if my understanding has improved.
- After today's meeting, I feel I have a better understanding of the company's strategic goals.
- What are our strategic goals? I know our Mission but the lines are blurred when we talk about strategy, objective, plans and tactics. After you provided some general feedback from the last round, Questionnaire #1, I feel like maybe I was way off the mark.
- Yes, knowing the why behind decisions help in understanding.
- Our collaborative communication has made the goals and requirements more transparent across the organization. I better understand how my part contributes to the larger goal.
- Yes because they are more transparent and aligned with each dept.
- I understand how strategic goals are developed.
- Yes, there is now a better understanding of how those goals are created and how they are pursued.
- My understanding of how strategic goals are developed has improved to the extent that I better understand why our company has made the decisions it has over the years, as well as why we are moving in the direction we are going.
- Developing strategic goals has improved through means of transparency. The goals and projects of other departments are much more visible now, and the levels of company cohesion have been reinforced through cross-departmental communication.
- Yes, I feel that I now better understand how strategic goals relate to the company's overall mission.
- Having a better understanding of the origin and focus of the organization adds insight to the development of strategies.
- I do see that we are more encouraged to evaluate our own documents and to have visibility into the goals of other departments

My analysis of the results:

- Respondents are curious now that the framework has been presented to see the actual implementation
- There is an understanding of how the direction will be documented and disseminated moving forward
- There is an understanding in how their roles will connect to the broader strategy
- More training is needed when we get closer to implementation to cement the connections and benefits (which was already planned)
Respondents were asked how the increased transparency over strategy helps them do their job better. Some of the responses were:

- It provides more purpose to my role in the larger picture of where this company is headed; more confidence in the future of the company provides me with an ability to work harder to help achieve company-wide goals.
- It gives me a better understanding of the company's goals and plans, which help guide me to find high quality grants.
- A unified, focused team can accomplish much more together, more efficiently and reach the desired outcome quicker then a team of individuals working towards that same outcome independently and unaware of others progress, pitfalls and solutions.
- I am not left to speculate on issues that either affect me or I may not agree with. Knowing why decisions are made helps me understand how it benefits the greater good.
- It helps clarify what tasks others are doing more than it impacts my ability to my job better
- It is very useful to have a clearer big picture. When the road map is clear, we understand where every team is trying to get, and how each team can push the other forward.
- Transparency over policy provides visibility into how my role is necessary to achieve goals, and allows me to identify areas I could participate that may have not been obvious otherwise.
- YES! A resounding yes!! It's important for AEs who are client facing to be capable of discussing our corporate strategy.
- Helps for looking at the big picture.
- I may have a better sense of what my job entails knowing the full company strategy.
- It helps me understand the intention of why I am publishing particular programs in order to best serve specific client needs.
- It allows me to prioritize my objectives/metrics appropriately.
- I feel that I have a better understanding of how my own commitments and the role of the department that I am under contributes to reaching the strategic goals that, in extension, help achieve the company's overall mission.
- I feel more connected to the company and to the role I play.

The results in this area are pretty self-explanatory. Respondents were then asked if the new changes will help them be better informed about how their role contributes to the company’s mission. The results mirror the positive comments above.
Respondents were asked how increased transparency over everyone’s commitments helped them with their job. Some of the responses were:

- Having an understanding of the commitments of my superiors will help me understand what they need from me in my role.
- It gives me a better understanding of how all parts of the company work together to achieve our overall goals, which in turn makes my personal goals more clear.
- I'm not 100% that it will help me directly in my job but may help me to know who I can collaborate with on projects that are similar should I need that information.
- It will provide context.
- It helps clarify how others are evaluated more than it impacts my ability to my job better.
- Transparency in commitments allows team to support each other. It helps us align our goals and all of us pull in the same direction.
- Clear understanding of individual and organizational goals supports prioritizing activity.
- Understand what everybody is doing.
- Everyone will better understand how their individual work will contribute to the organization as a whole, and how the completion of that work culminates into an end product or service.
- We will see who is working on what and how it relates to what we are working on.
- It is nice to understand how all roles are intertwined.
- Knowing where to go for support.
- Similarly to how transparency over company strategy helps me to better understand the strategy behind what the Research department is publishing, understanding others' commitments brings about a bigger picture of how we are working together to achieve a common goal.
- It allows me to see how my work fits in with the over-arching dept goals, and ultimately the mission of the company.
- I feel that I will have a better understanding of who to refer to when I need guidance on issues that are cross-departmental.
- I believe that it helps show where I could thrive in other areas of the company, by lending aid to other divisions with skills that I may have.
- Stronger feeling of being part of a team and how my own commitments fit in with those of my co-workers. Stronger understanding of the roles of others and of how I can add collaborate.

Respondents were asked, with the RASCI, whether they will have much greater clarity over key initiatives inside the organization and level of ownership. The results were positive, and helped alleviate some of the concerns from the previous survey.

![Bar chart showing clarity around projects and initiatives]

Respondents were asked how transparency over key initiatives and ownership helps them do their job better. Some of the responses were:

- Any unresolved questions or ambiguities should (ideally) be solved when this is put into practice in my CC document.
- It it useful for pointing me in the right direction if I were to need help or have a question for individuals of a particular department
- I'm not 100% that it will help me directly in my job but may help me to know who I can collaborate with on projects that are similar should I need that information or offer support. Also, how would that work as you eluded to a scenario where team members could volunteer their support on various projects if they had experience that was relevant.
- It helps make sure I am making good decisions on my work in relation to the objectives. It also avoids questioning decisions made by others in some instances.
- This helps me to prioritize activity related to personal and organizational goals.
- Understand what everybody is doing
- We will see who is working on what and how it relates to what we are working on.
- It is nice to understand how all roles are intertwined.
- Knowing where lines of responsibility lie and who's doing what.
- It allows me to know where my responsibilities lie, and I can better understand how and to what extent I can best serve my department/others.
- It will allow me to see how others are fulfilling their duties, and I will be able to gain a sense of other's priorities in relation to mine, and how everything is syncing together.
- I feel that I have better understanding of how my own commitments contribute to initiatives across departments. I also feel that I have become more aware of how my work can impact these initiatives.

One of the key outcomes from the change project was to increase employee engagement.

In terms of engagement, I asked if the new changes led to them feeling less or more engaged.

The results were exciting.

![Bar Chart]

Finally, I asked respondents for some comments.

- I think I'll be able to answer some of these questions more clearly once I know more in the future.
- I love the change process and love the changes being implemented. Will this implementation demand additional resources to manage all of the data as I would think ownership, level of involvement and initiatives will constantly be changing?
- The recent company-wide meetings have been useful "pulling the curtain back" on the "why we do what we do" to achieve company goals.
- It would be helpful to see the Company's strategy on the CC document.
Overall, it seems we are on the right track, and the new set of changes will help drive more collaboration and increase engagement. There is more work to be done, as more training is needed, and this should also be considered part of a broader initiative around information sharing and bringing context and clarity for everyone.

Communication of Results to Stakeholders

In order to communicate the results of the changes, an executive summary that covered the reasons for the change project, the seven themes that were identified, the methods agreed upon, and the pre- and post-implementation results. The summary can be found in Appendix E.

Assessment of Goal Achievement

The results clearly showed a positive change in the understanding of what “strategy” is and its importance in unifying the organization and a positive change in the understanding of how transparency around commitments and ownership will help the organization communicate and collaborate more effectively. As a result of the training, respondents also noted how more engaged they were as a result of the changes.
CHAPTER 5 - Final Reflections and Recommendations

Overall Project Summary

At the start of the project, it was clear that a breakdown in communication was a presenting itself as a clear and present danger for the organization. There were numerous comments around not being sure what was being worked was still a priority, whether the commitments each employee had assigned were still relevant, and while people understood what they were doing on a day to day basis had some connection to the mission, they could not communicate any meaningful commentary on company strategy.

As a mission-oriented organization, the company was very focused on a major milestone that would help transform the organization. Unfortunately, as a result, internal communication suffered, and overall morale was lower. Being in an ever-changing niche market as a small business with limited resources had clearly taken its toll on the organization. The organization’s core values of Going the Extra Mile, Version 2.0 (constant learning), and Us, Not Me (selflessness) is what led me to try and implement a change project inside the organization around the missing link: communication. And this was not communication in a void, but rather based on clear science that links goal development and communication to work satisfaction, engagement, and increased performance.

As a result, the project was started by working with six key stakeholders who represented various departments and levels inside the organization. After receiving the consent and explaining elements around privacy, I conducted the first Capstone Questionnaire. Afterwards, I picked two respondents to interview in greater detail. Throughout this process, I used mindful
techniques and active listening to make sure my assumptions and biases were not clouding the results of the surveys and interviews. After analyzing the results, it became clear that there were seven recurring themes, and I conducted a second capstone questionnaire to validate my findings, have respondents prioritize the themes given the project timeline, and suggest methods for producing change.

The next phase involved conducting a company-wide survey to establish a baseline, conducting training during an All Hands meeting, and finishing it off with a final survey to measure impact and change.

According to the survey results, the methods employed to bring better and more clear communication around company strategy, employee commitments, and initiative ownership across the company has led to a lot of positive feedback and increased engagement. Employees are eager to see the next phase of the project as we take more concrete steps.

Consistency of Guiding Values

The guiding values that motivated the change project were clearly linked to the organization’s own core values: Going the Extra Mile, Version 2.0 (constant learning), and Us, Not Me (selflessness). The organization’s mission is also aligned my own personal core values of using my time and effort to bring about clear positive change. I noted a clear gap and opportunity for me to use those values to bring realignment back to the organization through better communication. In doing so, it will help the organization fulfill its mission.

Throughout the process, I made sure to use mindfulness techniques, especially in areas where I knew my tenure at the organization could skew the surveys or interviews. I made sure to
check biases before each interaction, and validate each and every finding with others to make sure I was not seeing things through a special lens. I also used active listening techniques and focused on possibilities, not constraints.

And finally, the project, which had broad support, did produce its fair share of sparks inside the organization. There were moments I played to my strengths of being the calming voice in the room, and there were moments where I purposely rocked the boat to expose friction points, areas of disagreement, and areas where communication was clearly lacking. While these moments could have led to harsh feelings between co-workers, I employed the golden rule, and went out of my way to allay fears, provide reassurance, reconfirm intentions, and most of all, give folks the benefit of the doubt. I reminded folks over and over again that the project was not about me, or about them, but about the success of the organization and fulfilling the mission of the organization.

Project Impact on the Researcher

The project had a profound impact on me as a researcher. While I knew working in my own organization could prove challenging, I found myself constantly referring back to learnings from mindfulness, dialogue, collaboration and change courses to smooth the process and make sure there was constant momentum. This process helped reinforce a lot of the learning, and helped me contextualize and adapt some of the learnings for the organization I was working with. On a personal level, the whole process was quite challenging and draining, given I was also working on several other high-profile projects at the same time, yet I found being an internal change agent to be unique satisfying and one that I plan to repeat as I identify additional areas of
change.

Project Impact on the Stakeholders

One of the comments I received from all stakeholders was how appreciative they were that someone was taking the time to solve the problem around communication. The fact they were involved, and willing to provide such honest and frank feedback, showed just the process of surveying and interviewing folks can lead to a jump in engagement, curiosity, and appreciation. The survey results clearly showed how the input I received from stakeholders was spot on, and help “move the needle” for the organization. The discussion around company strategy itself led to a major internal project around defining the strategy for the next year, and I saw how the project led to a spark of engagement and collaboration. Comments like “this is what we always needed” really helped illustrate the impact on the stakeholders.

Overall Project Assessment

The key strengths of the projects were two: first, it addressed perhaps the biggest threat internal to the organization - communication and transparency to increase effectiveness and engagement, and second, it included a wide variety of stakeholders and every member of the executive team to sponsor and help make the project a reality.

The key weakness of the project is really around timing. Given the short timeline, we have had to settle on survey results, and I would have preferred to have more time to measure impacts to employee performance, the turnover rate, and the company’s bottom line.
Recommendations for Future Projects

In the following months, I will work to ensure the new changes become a part of the DNA of the company, and are well adopted by the organization. This includes ongoing training with managers to address questions and concerns as they start to take ownership over the changes and using the document to communicate changes in strategy on a quarterly basis. I will also work to make sure some of the other potential long-term impacts can be measured as well so that the change project can continue to have a positive story to tell.

The seven themes identified by the stakeholders also exposes additional areas where change can happen since only two were selected for this project. Based on the stakeholder voting, “Hat” and “Project Management” were additional areas where changes are needed. “Hat” deals with leveraging the RASCI in verbal and written communication to make sure all communication is clear about expectations since employees perform many different roles and “project management” means implementing a company-wide project management tool to provide transparency in ongoing projects such that metrics and progress is clear. Given all this, it looks like there is plenty of work ahead of me as a change agent inside the organization.
REFERENCES


“Mindfulness | Definition.” Greater Good, greatergood.berkeley.edu/mindfulness/definition.


Appendix A: Ethical Guidelines

- All stakeholders were told from the start of the project that any and all feedback would not be personally identifiable and would remain anonymous and not shared to anyone inside or outside the organization.
- Stakeholders signed a consent form.
- Each interaction explicitly called out and reminded the audience of the anonymous aspect of the project.

A blank copy of the consent form used in the project is below.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am doing an action research project about improving cohesion, alignment and work satisfaction, and I am asking you to be a participant in my research.

I will give priority to your interests at all times. To protect your interests in my final report, I promise the following:

- Your identity will be protected at all times in my final report unless you give me specific permission to use your name.
- You are free at any time to withdraw from the research project, whereupon I will destroy all data relating to you. I will report that a participant decided to leave the project, and reflect on ways the project might have been more conducive for all participants.
- I will make a copy of my research report available to you.

Two copies are enclosed. Please sign both. Keep one for your records and return the other to me.

Researcher’s Name: Sami Hoda

Date:
I have received an ethics statement from Sami Hoda.

Signed ___________________  Date ___________________

NOTE: If at any time you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact the Dean of Capstone Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Dr. Stan Ward. Please contact him by email: sward@claremontlincoln.edu, or call the university: 909-667-4400.
Appendix B: Stakeholder Collaboration Log

- May 2017 - Key sponsor in prior organization can no longer support a change project given limitations on time.

- June 15, 2017 - Email to new organization’s executives explains the purpose and goals of a change project and seeks formal approval. Approval is given within 48 hours.

- July 2017 - Worked with managers to provide an overview of the project and identify six stakeholders within the organization with the time and insight to help with the project.

- July 2017 - Emailed six stakeholders to provide an overview of the project. I also informed them about how much time their involvement would take, how their participation would be anonymous, and that they had to explicitly opt-in to participate in the project. I received six opt-ins.

- August 2017 - Stakeholders are sent Participant Privacy letters, which reinforces the privacy and anonymity aspects of the project. I received all six signed letters back from the stakeholders.

- August 2017 - Stakeholders are sent initial questionnaire via Google Forms to collect information regarding their understanding around company goals and their own commitments, gather feedback around they see the connection between the two, and whether they understand what they are trying to achieve links to what their supervisor is trying to achieve and how that links what the company is trying to achieve. It also asks about topics surrounding communication, clarity, alignment and cohesion.

- August 2017 - In person follow ups are scheduled with two stakeholders to dive deeper into the answers provided in the first questionnaire and several techniques are used
during the interview including appreciative inquiry.

- August 30, 2017 - Stakeholders are sent a second email summarizing some of the points learned from the first questionnaire and in person interviews. It also asked them to rank the issues in order of priority so that we could generate agreement on one or two items that could be focused on for this change project, and feedback on specific methods and measurements to ascertain achievement of outcomes and success.

- September 2017 - I met with the organization’s executives individually and asked them to also provide feedback on the items identified in the first questionnaire and rank them by priority. All the feedback was then compiled to focus in on the areas of change.

- October 2017 - I met with a group of executives to review my project scope, methods for implementation, and timeline to get clarification on issues or feedback on process once more and was asked to move forward quickly since it will help with 2018 planning. I also met with a group of managers to do the same, and received the same feedback along with confirmation that many of the issues being addressed are right on target.

- October 2017 - I met with members of the executive to dive deeper into methods and got buy in and support. I also met separately with managers to do the same, and got a lot of excitement. The final week of October and first week of November I have scheduled multiple meetings to dive deeper and set expectation with managers so they know how to communicate the changes with staff.

- November 2017 - I deployed the Pre-Implementation Questionnaire, implemented the changes in the Core Values and Commitments document, conducted a training session on the changes and the survey results, and deployed a Post-Implementation Questionnaire to
assess impact and change.

- November 2017 - communication of results to executives and stakeholders
Appendix C: Capstone Questionnaires

Capstone Questionnaire #1

Please submit candid feedback regarding the questions below. The more honest the answers, the more I am able to assist.

Keep in mind the goals of the Capstone project for my Master's program. Specifically, I think my research can uncover ways to improve or change the following:

1. Lack of cohesion, both in leaders and in staff and volunteers in how to communicate to achieve common goals
2. Lack of work satisfaction

Some of the anticipated outcomes of this research would be:

1. Improve communication between stakeholders
2. Increase employee engagement and satisfaction
3. Identify strengths and weaknesses between leaders and subordinates in order to develop better cohesion and alignment
4. Develop a plan for continuous improvements and developing a growth mindset (vs. a fixed one)

Full Name *

Please rank how well you feel you understand the company's 2017 Strategic Goals? *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Strategic Goals

Can you describe, in your own words, what you understand those 2017 Strategic Goals to be? *

Please rank how well you feel you understand how your role contributes to the company's mission and vision? *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Your Role's Contribution

Can you describe, in your own words, how your role contributes to the company's mission and vision? *

My supervisor understands how I contribute to the company's goals and mission/visions. *
Mark only one oval.

- True
- False
- Other:

I understand how my supervisor contributes to the company's goals and mission/visions. *
Mark only one oval.

- True
- False
Please rank how you feel your goals and commitments are ambitious yet SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Bound) *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious (the goals pushed me to achieve more)</td>
<td>Specific (target a specific area for improvement)</td>
<td>Measurable (quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress)</td>
<td>Attainable (it is realistic, given available resources)</td>
<td>Relevant (they are tied to my role and the company's goals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My supervisor has the means and tools to communicate to me about goals, projects and progress and give me regular feedback *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Means and Tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please describe the means and tools your supervisors uses to communicate about goals, projects and progress and provide feedback. *

I have the means and tools to communicate to my supervisor about goals, projects and progress and give regular feedback. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Means and Tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I can help my manager understand how they are doing and how they could develop (up coach) *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Up Coach

Please support your answer regarding up coaching. *

I understand my supervisor's strengths and weaknesses, and am able to balance and support them to achieve company goals. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Supervisor's Strengths and Weaknesses

I understand my own strengths and weaknesses, and have plans to fortify my strengths and remove my weaknesses to support achieving company goals. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

My Strengths and Weaknesses

I am constantly learning about myself, my role/ profession, and my industry. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Learning

I have a well defined career path. I regularly talk with my supervisor about short term and long term personal career goals. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Career Path

Do you agree with this statement: Clear communication regarding my role, my career path, and the company's goals would/does provide(s) me with high work satisfaction. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Statement

How would you improve this questionnaire?
Capstone Questionnaire #2

I had a chance to interview a few folks who filled out the first questionnaire, and together we were able to narrow down a few items that we felt were priority issues that could be addressed in the coming weeks. For my Master’s project, I am forced to narrow it down to 1-2 items, and come up with specific ways of measuring outcomes and success. This form is i hope to move down that road. Here are the items.

RASCI - Implement and Publish a RASCI Chart (https://managementmania.com/en/ras-ci-responsibility-matrix) for key roles in the company, and for key projects / initiatives as well. The hope would be to clarify who is Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, and Informed. This helps clarify roles and responsibilities, and helps alleviate scope creep.

UP COACH - Implement a formal up-coaching system. While people can enter areas where they need support from their supervisors in their Core Values and Commitments, create a parallel survey that HR will receive and help ensure for anonymity. The feedback can be aggregated and generalized so that HR can help provide feedback to managers individually, or pick up on trends for the whole team to work on.

HAT - Feedback from managers, especially those who wear multiple "hats" can be confusing for people. Am I getting this feedback as a colleague, as a supervisor, as an executive, as a project lead? Am I supposed to hear you out, take action, or coordinate some feedback? The lines have been blurred and it can lead to miscommunication.

SHARING - Implement more informal brown bag lunch sessions for various managers and project leads can share what they are working on, or different things they are hearing about that people should know about. Help break down silos, and disseminate information.

CAREER - Implement a more formal career path conversation as part of the CC. Where do you see yourself in 1, 2, or 3 years, what would you need to get there. how does that help the company, and how can the company help?

STRATEGY - Disseminate strategic company goals to a broader audience, and tie CCs to those goals. A visual representation should show how my goals tie into my supervisor's goals, which should tie into the company's goals. Also, would show how teams working together share a goal.

PROJECT MGMT - Use a more formal project management tool for initiatives (whether SocialCast company-wide, or otherwise) to track company initiatives and progress. Email is not the best communication tool, nor is IM. Get everyone trained and adopting a single system for the sake of transparency and efficiency. This would also help ensure feedback can be formally solicited and deadlines understood across the organization.

Full Name *

Top Priorities *
Rank Each, Make Sure Each Priority Is Only Used Once. In other words, there shouldn't be two items marked Priority 1. Mark only one oval per row.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

RASCI
UP COACH
HAT
SHARING
CAREER
STRATEGY
PROJECT MGMT
Other Priorities
Are there other priorities not mentioned above that deserve attention?

Methods *
Now that you've identified your top priorities, what methods would you suggest for implementing them. I've noted some options in the description above, but that list is neither exhaustive, nor suggested best practice. How do you suggest we get items priority 1 and 2 accomplished?

Measurements *
Now that you've described how we could possibly implement the change, how would you measure success - that the change actually had an impact? What would you measure before, during and after to call the change a success?
Pre-Implementation Questionnaire

We are making changes to our Core Values and Commitments document. In order to gauge the effectiveness of those changes, we'd like you to complete the following survey. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes. There will be a follow up survey after the changes are introduced.

Please submit candid feedback regarding the questions below. All results will be anonymized and are only viewable by Sami Hoda. The more honest the answers, the more we are able to assist.

Some of the anticipated outcomes of this changes would be:

1. Improve communication, cohesion and alignment between all eCivis Staff around company goals and strategy
2. Clear understanding of ownership around key projects, initiatives and commitments
3. Increased engagement and work satisfaction

Please Rank how well you feel you understand the company's 2017 Strategic Goals? *
Mark only one oval per row.

Poor  Fair  Satisfactory  Very good  Excellent

Strategic Goals

Can you describe, in your own words, what you understand those 2017 Strategic Goals to be? *

Please rank how well you feel you understand how your role contributes to the company's mission and vision? *
Mark only one oval per row.

Poor  Fair  Satisfactory  Very good  Excellent

Your Role's
Contribution

Can you describe, in your own words, how your role contributes to the company's mission and vision? *

My supervisor understands how I contribute to the company's goals and mission/ vision. *
Mark only one oval.

○ True
○ False
○ Other:

I understand how my supervisor contributes to the company's goals and mission/ vision. *
Mark only one oval.

○ True
○ False
○ Other:

I have a clear understanding of the key project and initiatives inside the company. *
Mark only one oval per row.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
Clarity around projects
and initiatives

I understand who leads and owns key projects and how different roles contribute to that project *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Ownership and
Contribution

Any comments?
Post-Implementation Questionnaire

As you have seen, we are making changes to our Core Values and Commitments document. In order to gauge the effectiveness of those changes, we'd like you to complete the following survey. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes.

Please submit candid feedback regarding the questions below. All results will be anonymized and are only viewable by Sami Hoda. The more honest the answers, the more we are able to assist.

Full Name (only needed for any specific follow up) *

Do you agree with this statement: with the new changes, I will be much better informed about the company's direction (strategic goals). *
Mark only one oval per row.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Strategic Goals

Can you describe, in your own words, if your understanding about how strategic goals are developed has improved? *

How does having transparency over company strategy help you do your job better? *

Do you agree with this statement: with the new changes, I will be much better informed about how my role contributes to the company's mission. *
Mark only one oval per row.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Your Role's Contribution

How does having transparency everyone's commitments help you do your job better? *

Do you agree with this statement: with the new changes, I will have much greater clarity over what the key initiatives are inside the organization, and to what level people are involved. *
Mark only one oval per row.

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |

Clarity around projects
and initiatives

How does having transparency around initiatives and ownership across the company help you do your job better? *
With the new changes, rate your level of engagement with the company's mission. *
Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disengaged</th>
<th>Less engaged</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>More engaged</th>
<th>Re-energized!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly engaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engagement

Any comments? Suggestions? Areas of improvement?
# Appendix D: Core Values and Commitments Document Changes

## Direction Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Board / Executives</td>
<td>Why are we here? What is our reason for existing?</td>
<td></td>
<td>M1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>What do we wish to achieve (broad scope)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>OB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OB2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OB3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OB4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>Objectives expressed in measurable terms (backed by reasoning and evidence).</td>
<td></td>
<td>G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Executives / Management</td>
<td>What must we do to achieve the goals and objectives, and why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans / Tactics / Logistics</td>
<td>Management / Executives</td>
<td>How shall we do it, and by when? Are there constraints or dependencies?</td>
<td></td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Executives / Management</td>
<td>Doing it: Who owns what portion, what metrics and reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td>OP1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OP2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OP3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OP4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Executives / Management</td>
<td>Output judged against goals (how and how often)</td>
<td></td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>What do the results mean (to the company, the industry, the market), and why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>OU1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OU2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OU3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OU4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commitments Chart Worksheet

Organizational Chart (this image has been obfuscated for privacy purposes)

Commitments List (this image has been obfuscated for privacy purposes)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James He</td>
<td>New Sales (Bookings)</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Hoger</td>
<td>Survey / Satisfaction Rating</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Holli</td>
<td>Bookings Protection / CRM</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yves Thomas</td>
<td>Sales / Customer</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Freli</td>
<td>Bookings - Sales</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yves Gribes</td>
<td>Sales / Customer</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Swanson</td>
<td>Product Marketing / Execution</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar Gut Naveo</td>
<td>Survey / Satisfaction Rating</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwion Shee</td>
<td>Bookings - Sales</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Willock</td>
<td>New Sales (Bookings)</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hanelli</td>
<td>Customer Experience/CRM</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Freli</td>
<td>Bookings - Sales</td>
<td>erox Play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ownership Worksheet

This image has been obfuscated for privacy purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Responsible - who is responsible for carrying out the entrusted task?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Accountable (also Approver) - who is responsible for the whole task and who is responsible for what has been carried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Supportive - who provides support during the implementation of the activity / process / service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Consulted - who can provide valuable advice or consultation for the task?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Informed - who should be informed about the task progress or the decisions in the task?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Communication of Results to Stakeholders

All,

I’d like to thank you all for participating and contributing to my Masters project. I could not have done this without your support, and more importantly, your frank and honest feedback. Below you’ll find a summary of the results of the project as it stands today. I am also finishing up my thesis, which will have a broader discussion on these topics.

As you know, in the last All Hands meeting, I presented the changes to the company. The changes were a result of surveys and interviews which highlighted seven areas of improvement around communication. We worked together to pick two, and found that the core values and commitments document were the most sustainable way to implement changes in communication and resolve some of the issues we were encountering.

Before the All Hands meeting, I conducted a survey with everyone who was not part of the original stakeholder group (the rest of the company) to establish a baseline around how people understood and felt about strategy and initiative ownership inside the company. After my training, I conducted a second survey to see if any of those thoughts had changed, and to see whether the changes had “moved the needle”.

Below is a summary of the results and some of my analysis:

First Survey - Baseline

In the first survey, I asked respondents to rank how well they felt they understood the company’s strategy for 2017, and to describe in their own words what that might mean. There was a wide spread when it came to responses on the first question. Many felt Satisfactory, and others Very Good, but there were others who felt Poor, Fair and Excellent.
To see whether this was based on a correct frame of reference, I asked the respondents to describe the company strategy for 2017. Some of the responses were:

- Obtain more revenue.
- Provide excellent customer service in order to achieve raving fans.
- I do not know what the company's 2017 Strategic Goals are.
- Make more money, grow the company and our saturation of the market
- Company’s goal is to be the leader in the field.
- Our core values.
- I believe it's raving fans, along with improving client renewal and increasing ACV. But honestly, I am not sure.
- I searched for "strategic goals" on the company intranet and did not find them. I'd bet they are related to profitability and market share. Perhaps some customer satisfaction and product innovation, too. I don't know whether we're trending up or down.

Some of what I understood from the results was:

- Respondents did not understand the term “strategy” or confused it with high-level narratives, our mission statement, themes (such as Raving Fan), or their tactical department goals
- Respondents simply did not know
- Even if they did not know, there were no means to find out in written form

I then asked if the respondents understood how their role contributed to the company’s mission and vision, and they were generally more optimistic.

![Graph showing contribution grades]

When asked how their role continued to the company’s mission and vision, people listed their tactical duties overall. There was little to connect it to any of what they listed as strategy above. Some of the responses were:

- My role in the pre-award stage is obvious. I have no role in the post-award stage.
- We find the information for our clients to help the grants community.
- I help summarize funding opportunities so that clients can more efficiently gauge which funding opportunities they should devote their resources to.
- Closing business and forecasting when that business will close.
- I am responsible for contributing to the database.
- As an editor, my role is to ensure that the programs I publish are of the highest quality and accuracy for our clients.
- Provide our clients with an excellent on-boarding and implementation experience that is easy and simple for them and allows them to realize their goals. Provide our clients with rapid, reactive support and provide them with solutions so that they can get back to serving their communities.
- Raving fans want to be able to access services and have them function as expected. Beyond that, I don't have any evidence that my work influences what may well turn out to be our mission and vision.

In the same way, respondents were generally positive their supervisor understood how they were contributing, and they understood how their supervisor was contributing, however it seems this was also very tactical oriented as well.

In the survey, I asked if they had a clear understand of key projects and initiatives inside the company. Results were mixed, although half the respondents tended to agree.

![Bar chart showing clarity around projects and initiatives]

I also asked if they understood who leads and owns those initiatives. Results were pretty similar.
Given the previous results, I was not sure this was the respondents being overly optimistic, or simply feeling they knew what was going on. This set of results contradicted my survey and interview feedback, which led me to believe:

1. Managers generally have confusion around ownership and roles (especially since they were many hats)
2. The rest of the company does not know what they do not know, and more information sharing will shed light on this. See comment below.

Finally, some of the responded added notes:

- I do not have a clear understanding of what other departments are doing. I feel like I have a very clear understanding of my role in the pre-award stage. But I feel like I barely understand what's going on with the post-award stuff. Outside of my department, I do not think I have a good grasp of what's going on.
- Less is more. Pick a few key points and emphasize those. Sometimes I do feel that everyone here gives too much info and the core of what matters gets lost! I hate to use the phrase "talking points" but short, poignant messages are better than monologues. Keep it to the point. I do believe the company has excellent staff committed to the goals, but it just needs a crisper presentation.
- It's helpful to get a monthly aural update from other departments. I think our real challenge is defining how success is measured and demonstrating efficacy.

**Second Survey – Post-Changes Introduction**

I asked respondents to rate whether, with the new changes in the CC, if they will be better informed about the company’s direction. There was a majority in Agree and Strongly Agree.
I asked respondents, in their own words, to describe how their understanding around how strategic goals are developed has improved. Some of the responses were:

- The meeting has clarified answers to my questions, but I'll need to see changes in my actual document first before I determine if my understanding has improved.
- After today's meeting, I feel I have a better understanding of the company's strategic goals.
- What are our strategic goals? I know our Mission but the lines are blurred when we talk about strategy, objective, plans and tactics. After you provided some general feedback from the last round, Questionnaire #1, I feel like maybe I was way off the mark.
- Yes, knowing the why behind decisions help in understanding.
- Our collaborative communication has made the goals and requirements more transparent across the organization. I better understand how my part contributes to the larger goal.
- Yes because they are more transparent and aligned with each dept.
- I understand how strategic goals are developed.
- Yes, there is now a better understanding of how those goals are created and how they are pursued.
- My understanding of how strategic goals are developed has improved to the extent that I better understand why our company has made the decisions it has over the years, as well as why we are moving in the direction we are going.
- Developing strategic goals has improved through means of transparency. The goals and projects of other departments are more more visible now, and the levels of company cohesion have been reinforced through cross-departmental communication.
- Yes, I feel that I now better understand how strategic goals relate to the company's overall mission.
- Having a better understanding of the origin and focus of the organization adds insight to the development of strategies.
- I do see that we are more encouraged to evaluate our own documents and to have visibility into the goals of other departments.

My analysis of the results:
• Respondents are curious now that the framework has been presented to see the actual implementation
• There is an understanding of how the direction will be documented and disseminated moving forward
• There is an understanding in how their roles will connect to the broader strategy
• More training is needed when we get closer to implementation to cement the connections and benefits (which was already planned)

I asked respondents, how the increased transparency over strategy helps them do their job better. Some of the responses were:

• It provides more purpose to my role in the larger picture of where this company is headed; more confidence in the future of the company provides me with an ability to work harder to help achieve company-wide goals.
• It gives me a better understanding of the company's goals and plans, which help guide me to find high quality grants.
• A unified, focused team can accomplish much more together, more efficiently and reach the desired outcome quicker than a team of individuals working towards that same outcome independently and unaware of others progress, pitfalls and solutions.
• I am not left to speculate on issues that either affect me or I may not agree with. Knowing why decisions are made helps me understand how it benefits the greater good.
• It helps clarify what tasks others are doing more than it impacts my ability to my job better
• It is very useful to have a clearer big picture. When the road map is clear, we understand where every team is trying to get, and how each team can push the other forward.
• Transparency over policy provides visibility into how my role is necessary to achieve goals, and allows me to identify areas I could participate that may have not been obvious otherwise.
• YES! A resounding yes!! It's important for AEs who are client facing to be capable of discussing our corporate strategy.
• Helps for looking at the big picture.
• I may have a better sense of what my job entails knowing the full company strategy.
• It helps me understand the intention of why I am publishing particular programs in order to best serve specific client needs.
• It allows me to prioritize my objectives/metrics appropriately.
• I feel that I have a better understanding of how my own commitments and the role of the department that I am under contributes to reaching the strategic goals that, in extension, help achieve the company's overall mission.
• I feel more connected to the company and to the role I play.

The results in this area are pretty self-explanatory.

I asked respondents if the new changes will help them be better informed about their role contributes to the company’s mission. The results mirror the positive comments above.
I asked respondents how increased transparency over everyone’s commitments helped them with their job. Some of the responses were:

- Having an understanding of the commitments of my superiors will help me understand what they need from me in my role.
- It gives me a better understanding of how all parts of the company work together to achieve our overall goals, which in turn makes my personal goals more clear.
- I’m not 100% that it will help me directly in my job but may help me to know who I can collaborate with on projects that are similar should I need that information.
- It will provide context.
- It helps clarify how others are evaluated more than it impacts my ability to my job better.
- Transparency in commitments allows team to support each other. It helps us align our goals and all of us pull in the same direction.
- Clear understanding of individual and organizational goals supports prioritizing activity.
- Understand what everybody is doing
- Everyone will better understand how their individual work will contribute to the organization as a whole, and how the completion of that work culminates into an end product or service.
- We will see who is working on what and how it relates to what we are working on.
- It is nice to understand how all roles are intertwined.
- Knowing where to go for support.
- Similarly to how transparency over company strategy helps me to better understand the strategy behind what the Research department is publishing, understanding others’ commitments brings about a bigger picture of how we are working together to achieve a common goal.
- It allows me to see how my work fits in with the over-arching dept goals, and ultimately the mission of the company.
- I feel that I will have a better understanding of who to refer to when I need guidance on issues that are cross-departmental.
- I believe that it helps show where I could thrive in other areas of the company, by lending aid to other divisions with skills that I may have.
- Stronger feeling of being part of a team and how my own commitments fit in with those of my co-workers. Stronger understanding of the roles of others and of how I can add collaborate.

I asked respondents, with the RASCI, whether they will have much greater clarity over key initiatives inside the organization and level of ownership. The results were positive, and helped alleviate some of the concerns from the previous survey.

![Bar chart showing clarity around projects and initiatives]

I asked respondents how transparency over key initiatives and ownership helps them do their job better. Some of the responses were:

- Any unresolved questions or ambiguities should (ideally) be solved when this is put into practice in my CC document.
- It is useful for pointing me in the right direction if I were to need help or have a question for individuals of a particular department.
- I'm not 100% that it will help me directly in my job but may help me to know who I can collaborate with on projects that are similar should I need that information or offer support. Also, how would that work as you eluded to a scenario where team members could volunteer their support on various projects if they had experience that was relevant.
- It helps make sure I am making good decisions on my work in relation to the objectives. It also avoids questioning decisions made by others in some instances.
- This helps me to prioritize activity related to personal and organizational goals.
- Understand what everybody is doing.
- We will see who is working on what and how it relates to what we are working on.
- It is nice to understand how all roles are intertwined.
- Knowing where lines of responsibility lie and who's doing what.
- It allows me to know where my responsibilities lie, and I can better understand how and to what extent I can best serve my department/others.
- It will allow me to see how others are fulfilling their duties, and I will be able to gain a sense of other's priorities in relation to mine, and how everything is syncing together.
- I feel that I have better understanding of how my own commitments contribute to initiatives across departments. I also feel that I have become more aware of how my work can impact these initiatives.
One of the key outcomes from this approach to change management is to increase employee engagement and work satisfaction. In terms of engagement, I asked if the new changes led to them feeling less or more engaged. The results were exciting.

Finally, I asked respondents for some comments.

- I think I'll be able to answer some of these questions more clearly once I know more in the future.
- I love the change process and love the changes being implemented. Will this implementation demand additional resources to manage all of the data as I would think ownership, level of involvement and initiatives will constantly be changing?
- The recent company-wide meetings have been useful "pulling the curtain back" on the "why we do what we do" to achieve company goals.
- It would be helpful to see the Company's strategy on the CC document.

Overall, it seems we are on the right track, and the new set of changes will help drive more collaboration and increase engagement. There is more work to be done, as more training is needed, and this should also be considered part of a broader initiative around information sharing and bringing context and clarity for everyone.