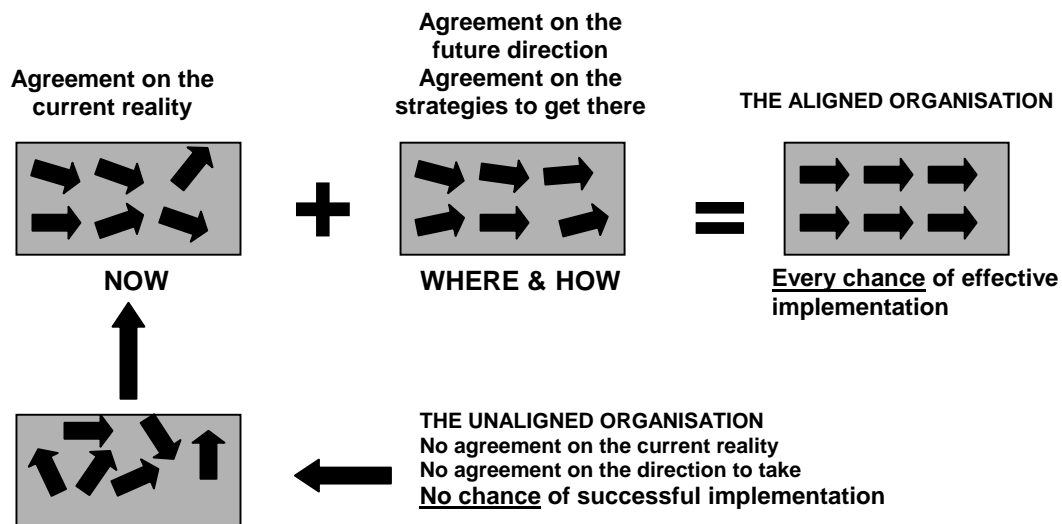


Article 13 – Making it happen is the hard part

“Deciding what to do is the easy part; actually making it happen is the hard part. In business you get no rewards for intentions.”

This quote from Sir John Harvey-Jones, former Chairman of ICI PLC is one of my favourites because it is oh so true. Organisations quite happily spend millions on the planning process only to waste that investment on ineffectual implementation. Why? As usual, there are lots of reasons but fundamentally they boil down to one – lack of alignment. The belief by some members of your organisation that what they are being asked to do is incorrect, not justified or not worth the time and effort required to do it.

The problem is that so many organisations see implementation as separate from the planning process whereas the seeds of successful implementation are sown right at its beginning.



Successful implementation starts with agreement on the current reality. Only after the need for change is agreed can its direction be determined. If a business plan is imposed on an unaligned organisation, there is just no chance that it will be implemented. That's a sobering thought given that "no organisation is so screwed up that there isn't someone who likes it just the way it is".

That's the bad news – but there's worse to come. Even if the organisation is behind the plan, there are still at least 26 reasons why things don't get done.

1. There were no clear subsidiary objectives.
2. The program was just a series of activities - there were no clear results to aim for.
3. Senior management gave insufficient support.
4. We were not given adequate information.
5. We did not have enough skills to carry out the program.
6. There were no systems set up to monitor progress.

7. Others that I turned to for assistance did not share my enthusiasm or commitment. Their attitude was - it's not my problem - it's not my responsibility.
8. Individual roles in the programs were unclear.
9. Not clear where the buck stopped.
10. We spent insufficient time planning before moving to implementation.
11. There was no system set up to pick up problems and help sort them out.
12. We needed additional resources that were not made available.
13. No arrangements were put in place to allow us to focus on the program and our normal jobs at the same time.
14. Not enough people were given an adequate explanation or sufficient information about the program.
15. We did not understand the "big picture" and how our work fitted into it.
16. Other people resented me encroaching on their "territory".
17. It wasn't their idea so the people that I turned to for support did not respond.
18. It was "flavour of the month" and people lost interest.
19. We had to start fire fighting again so the project was abandoned.
20. There were factors outside the company that we had no control over.
21. Progress was so slow that everyone lost interest.
22. We never agreed on the way in which the project should be tackled.
23. We had no timetable for implementation.
24. The company would not release the information we needed.
25. We could never find a time to hold meetings that everyone could attend.
26. The focus of the company is on the short-term rather than the long-term

If reasons like the above are not to surface later on, it's imperative that this "checklist" is considered *before* implementation not when things start to go wrong.

So there you have it! Align the organisation behind the plan and remove the impediments to its implementation. Simple it's not – but that's what gives organisations that can implement business plans effectively such an advantage. It's an advantage even if the business strategies are the wrong ones and force a re-think. One – you know that the problem lies with the strategy – not its execution. And two – you spend less time going up a blind alley before realising the plan is not working.