

Effective Goal Alignment and Management



CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Alignment.....	4
Organizational Alignment: The Modern Approach to Goals Management.....	6
How to Achieve Goal Alignment and Management in 7 Steps.....	9
Conclusion.....	12
About Atiim.....	13



INTRODUCTION

Today, CEOs and managers must effectively align their people's efforts with organizational priorities in order to boost productivity and achieve aggressive goals. In doing so, you will experience:

- Quick and effective execution of organizational strategies
- Better performance and strengths-based development for all employees
- Improved morale and employee engagement levels
- Company initiatives that are clear, focused, and consistent
- A visible line of sight from the junior to CEO level objectives
- A system in which company goals become a day-to-day priority for all employees

Goal alignment and management should be a priority for companies of all sizes and industries, but they are particularly critical for start-ups and developing mid-market companies, since it's easy for employees to become overextended within these organizations.

Today, there are tools available that help organizations achieve effective goal alignment and management; however, it's important to consider the needs of your company when selecting a system that will work best for you. Most importantly, the tool you choose should assist – not distract – employees, and it should also be compatible with your organization.

In this guide, we'll explore why adopting a modern goal alignment and management approach is critical to achieving organizational goals, as well as strategies you can use to implement these processes in your company right away.



ALIGNMENT

One of the biggest challenges CEOs and managers struggle with is aligning employees' efforts to company goals. When approached the right way, goals alignment can become a natural process by which your employees work to achieve enterprise goals.

But before we discuss how to achieve alignment, let's first review what alignment really means in an organization, and why it's so critical to have.

What is Alignment?

"Alignment" is a company's ability to use resources to complete goals. Thus, "goal alignment" is the process by which executives tie all employees' goals to the overarching company priorities.

Here's why you need goal alignment to be successful:

- It keeps everyone moving in the same direction
- Aggressive goals become more realistic to achieve
- Goal alignment is approached as an ongoing process, there by providing continuous clarity on organizational strategies and a link to company goals for all employees



You can achieve alignment using a two-pronged approach: specifically, you must have corporate goals management and an ongoing performance review system.

When you combine these two processes into one unified function, not only will you have unwavering alignment to company goals across your whole organization, you'll also engage employees and save time.

Here are some additional benefits of goal alignment and management:

- Your company will be able to move swiftly from planning stages to execution
- Resource allocation becomes accurate and effective
- You'll eliminate redundancy and misaligned efforts
- You'll empower employees to achieve their own aggressive goals and create ownership for their progress
- Employee engagement will excel, and as a result, you'll have a team of high performers and lower retention rates

Achieving goal alignment isn't just optional – it's essential for organizational success. Without it, efforts to complete goals become out of sync and disorganized, making objectives much less likely to be achieved. Goal alignment lets you capitalize on – and excel – your employees' performance and progress, which in turn drives profits.



ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT: THE MODERN APPROACH TO GOALS MANAGEMENT

In order to achieve effective alignment in your organization, it's important to distinguish amongst the two most common alignment approaches: People-Centric Alignment vs. Organizational Alignment.

People-Centric, the "Old" Alignment Method

People-centric alignment was the original approach to goals management. During the early 2000s, it allowed CEOs and executives to cascade their own objectives down to junior-level employees. While it was certainly a logical approach and ultimately provided the foundation for organizational alignment, people-centric alignment turned out to be ineffective for a few reasons:

- Employees had to wait for their managers to complete their goals before they could plan their own
- It wasted time and required intensive administrative work
- All goals were dictated from the top, meaning that people had no say in their own objectives and therefore had little commitment/buy-in, causing employee engagement to drop
- There was often a lack of an overarching plan/strategy to complete aligned goals
- The approach was strictly hierarchical and didn't allow for collaboration
- While goals could be aligned from the top-down, it became difficult to link people across departments



Organizational Alignment, the Modern Approach

The new method of goal alignment emphasizes organizational goals, instead of exclusively focusing on an individual's goals (such as the CEO). This approach typically complements the existing planning/budgetary frameworks that companies already have in place, and it also reduces the administrative work that must be done to ensure alignment.

Here are some reasons why focusing on the goals of the organization – instead of the individual – is a better approach:

- It enables you and your employees to keep up with the priorities of the company as they shift to adapt to the business climate, personnel changes, and other factors
- Individual and team goals are inherently aligned, because they all contribute to overarching company objectives
- It allows employees to collaborate with management and create some of their own tasks and tactics for completing goals
- You can track and communicate progress and access performance data more easily and in real-time
- The ongoing process of tracking/communicating progress helps employees gain clarity and achieve an in-depth understanding of how their objectives link to company goals
- You can spot red flags as they arise and take a proactive approach to avoid obstacles
- Objectives and their results are easy to measure
- The processes by which employees report progress are easy to implement and maintain
- You can also course-correct as needed to keep employee progress on the right track
- There is greater overall visibility into how all employees will assist in achieving company goals



Selecting the Right Goals Management Tool

Today, there are tools available to facilitate organizational alignment and the effective management of goals and performance. The most effective tools combine performance and goals management into one integrated system, and are ideally automated so that there are virtually no interruptions in workflow.

With automated performance management systems, such as weekly employee progress reports used in conjunction with a goals management process like OKRs, managers can achieve a two-way, closed loop of feedback with their employees.

This helps managers and executives track progress in real-time, and it also makes performance management an ongoing process. That way, managers can course-correct and coach on a regular basis, and there are no surprises when an employee receives a formal appraisal.

Ultimately, working towards and assessing progress of organizational objectives become continuous activities for both managers and their employees. Using this continuous approach makes goal alignment and performance easy to manage and maintain on an ongoing basis.

Most importantly, the tool that you select should complement your existing processes. An automated employee progress report – such as Atiim's – can work for any company, because it requires employees to discuss progress, identify potential roadblocks, and reassess priorities just once per week in as few as five minutes. Reports are automated and delivered straight to employees' inboxes, and once they're completed, they're sent to managers for review. That way, you receive an all-encompassing overview on progress and priorities every week, without having to take any extra time to track down updates.



HOW TO ACHIEVE GOAL ALIGNMENT AND MANAGEMENT IN 7 STEPS

Eventually, goal alignment will take on a natural rhythm in your organization. (Remember, it's an ongoing process, not a single event, so it's critical to approach it as such.) One advantage you'll see is that for many organizations, achieving goal alignment and effective, ongoing performance management is really about building on existing process, rather than starting from scratch.

Here's what you can do to begin working towards effective goal alignment and management now:

1. Meet with Execs and Upper Management

- Identify your existing processes, and discuss the strategies for building upon them
- Figure out the top company priorities that you can work towards for the upcoming quarter. This will be the framework upon which you base your entire organization's OKRs.
- Discuss how you'll achieve alignment by linking all employee and departmental objectives with the top priorities you've identified.

2. Create Cascading Alignment

- Meet with department managers to identify objectives for each department, which will support company priorities determined in the previous step
- Double check that all objectives are aligned by seeing not only how they cascade downwards, but also how they roll up



3. Link Goals to Results

- Use OKRs to establish key results for each departmental objective
- Ensure clarity by using S.M.A.R.T. goal methodology when drafting OKRs.
- Make sure that the strategies – not just the objectives themselves – also meet S.M.A.R.T. criteria

4. Collaborate for Employee OKRs

- Repeat step 2-3 on the individual contributor level so that employees have their own set of OKRs that are S.M.A.R.T.
- Allow employees to come up with their own tasks & tactics that will help them complete OKRs
- Again, make sure that objectives not only cascade downwards, but also flow upwards so that all efforts are contributing towards the completion of company goals

5. Measure Progress

- Use ongoing performance management to consistently track progress towards OKR completion
- Have managers check in with employees weekly to reiterate priorities, discuss possible bottlenecks, and review weekly wins
- If progress is falling behind, have management course-correct as needed
- Ensure that a two-way, collaborative communication loop has been achieved and that both management and employees have clarity on expectations and priorities
- Re-align objectives if needed at any point



6. Facilitate Employee Development

- Encourage use of a performance management tool, such as weekly progress reports, so that employees have a way to measure and track progress
- Use weekly meetings as an outlet in which employees can discuss development opportunities
- Discuss performance regularly, and identify the standards against which performance is measured
- Regularly praise employees for small accomplishments
- If you need to give constructive feedback, do so when the unproductive behavior/underperformance takes place

7. Hold Formal Reviews

- Even with ongoing performance management, it's still important to hold formal appraisals to discuss performance
- Discuss with employees how their performance impacts company goals
- Make performance management future-focused and encourage employees' growth



CONCLUSION

Goal alignment and management is critical to creating a team of high performers and to achieving ambitious company goals. Without it, your priorities and efforts will be misaligned, and there will be no cohesion or cooperation; efforts will be moving in all different directions instead of working together towards one common purpose.

Goal alignment and management is achievable for organizations of any size, and is easy to implement in startups and companies in any industry. You'll save time and boost employee engagement by structuring goals based on your employees' greatest strengths and your company's highest priorities. This powerful approach makes it possible for you to improve performance, progress, and ultimately, profits.



ABOUT ATIIM

Atiim is building an innovative yet easy-to-use OKR Goals Management SaaS product which enables fast-growing small and midsize companies to maximize business results. Imagine all employees getting a clear direction, understanding what they are trying to achieve, and everyone is aligned to top corporate priorities and is focused and working on what drives business results. That's Atiim.

Atiim's mission is to help companies and their people work better and win as a team. We do this by helping maximize each company's business results through more effective execution of goals in a way that is more clear, focused, engaging and meaningful. We enable and empower people to perform well at work, making themselves and their organizations more successful, as a team.



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