



Ensuring Alignment

One of the biggest challenges in any business is ensuring you and your team are aligned on the same priorities. A business team in complete alignment is a very powerful force. One that isn't can be a recipe for disaster. Here's one idea to help create and ensure alignment:

Set Up Quarterly 1 to 1 Meetings with each of your direct reports. In each of these meetings focus on six key questions. Ideally, each question will result in a dialogue that helps clarify priorities, ensures alignment, and promotes mutual understanding:

1. Where are we going?

As the manager, share your views on key priorities for the company/division. Then ask for your direct report's views. This dialogue will help ensure alignment between your view and theirs on what really matters.

2. Where are you going?

Give your view on where you believe the direct report (and their part of the business) should be headed. Then ask for their view on the desired direction. This dialogue will help ensure alignment between your management of the broader company's goals and the management of their part of your organisation.

3. What are you doing well?

Share your view on what you believe are their key achievements over the past quarter. Then ask them to share their perceptions on what they're doing well. Sometimes a lack of recognition is not a function of not caring - it is a function of not understanding achievements from the other person's perspective. By asking, "*What do you think you are doing well?*" - we can get their perspective.

4. What changes can lead to improvement?

Share your ideas on how more progress can be made in the future - then ask for their ideas. Be open to the possibility that their ideas may be more useful than yours.

5. How can I help?

Ask for ideas on how you can better help them achieve agreed upon goals. If you want to be a better leader, this question will help.

6. What suggestions do you have for me?

Ask for their ideas on changes that you can make to become a more effective manager/ leader. If you want them to focus on continuous improvement, it's always useful to lead by example.

In between each quarterly 1 to 1, establish your mutual responsibility for ongoing alignment. Let them be responsible for immediately contacting you if they are ever uncertain about priorities or need feedback. Likewise, you are responsible for letting them know if the business situation changes and you need to re-set priorities. A very simple process and one that if done has fantastic results on results and communication.