Alignment Cycle Case Study

Designing an Organization to Evaluate Eco-labels and Standards

Background

The market has seen a proliferation of eco-labels and green product claims. Buyers, marketers and suppliers required guidance to determine the reliability of these eco-labels and the legitimacy of claims made about products. They saw the urgent need for an independent, respected body that could provide such guidance.

For three years, The Keystone Center had been facilitating the Green Products Roundtable (GPR) to dialogue and reach consensus on a solution to this problem. The GPR is comprised of members representing government, academia, for-profit companies, and environmental NGOs. In the process of developing an outline of a plan for a new entity, the GPR members recognized they had differences of opinion on critical implementation issues. These ranged from the scope of services and customers to the entity's governance and funding.

The GPR realized it needed to intensify its activity. To compress the time to achieve consensus on the details of a strategic business plan, The Keystone Center and GPR chose to use an Alignment Cycle. This process was used in conjunction with a previously planned two-day plenary meeting.

Alignment Cycle Attributes

Organizations:	44	Participant Roles:	Executive, Management, Purchasing	# of Opinions:	0 132
Participants:	50	Total Time per person with plenary:	20 hours	# of Themes:	0 14 20
Geographic Regions	Primarily U.S.	Spread Across:	12 weeks	Alignment Index™:	0 74 100

Insights

The Alignment Cycle Surfaced:

- Despite numerous divergent opinions, 16 previously unrecognized points of complete agreement (SchellingPoints) were revealed. This reassured the group and formed a foundation for the plan.
- GPR had a strong concern the new organization would duplicate the work of others in the field. Previously this had only been debated conceptually, and never to resolution. The Alignment Cycle enabled them to narrow the project's scope to customers and services where there was alignment. The duplication concern was also addressed concretely and resolved.
- There existed a preconception that the differences of opinion were between demographic groups, (e.g. for-profit companies disagreeing with environmental NGOs) and thus rooted in core values. This was shown to be inaccurate. More divergence was **within** demographic groups than across them. This otherwise unavailable insight reshaped the conversation.
- The most contentious issues being debated at previous meetings were rapidly resolved by sharing data and information or were determined not be core to the launch of the entity.
- Of the 14 themes assessed, (which represented the elements of a business plan) the initial alignment assessment indicated critical divergence on four, (the geographic scope, decision-making process, the organization structure, and funding). By the end of the alignment cycle process, consensus positions were found for **all** four.

Process

- The assessment results were used in advance of the plenary meeting. Members of the GPR participated in four targeted, web-based conversations addressing critical divergent topics. The summarized dialogue and recommendations from these one-hour web meetings greatly increased productivity for the larger group at the plenary meeting. Four additional web-based meetings followed the plenary meeting to refine details for the business plan.

Results

- A written business plan based on the consensus of diverse stakeholders was produced within two weeks of the plenary meeting, and it is being implemented.
- An initial leadership team has been formed. Fundraising, marketing and a search for an Executive Director have begun.
- The GPR moved the initiative forward with unprecedented alignment in twelve weeks.

ALIGNMENT CYCLES™

Using a *quantifiable* measurement of your DEGREE OF ALIGNMENT
to rapidly translate varied opinion into coordinated action.

 At the heart is SchellingPoint's web-based Alignment Optimization Technology™. AOT allows any number of people, from anywhere in the world, to understand their degree of alignment on any topic and translate the insights into a single, endorsed plan of action.

When Should We Use An Alignment Cycle?

🕐 At the *beginning* of an initiative, to ensure the team has the most *comprehensive understanding* of those responsible for executing and those judging its success.

🕐 *During* any collaboration which is falling short of its desired target, to surface and remove the issues blocking success.

🕐 *Periodic checks* to maintain alignment of a long-term collaboration, to ensure optimal performance as the environment changes.

Where Is Alignment Essential?

Wherever individuals are coming together to design and coordinate their actions, for example:

- ✓ Transformation initiatives
- ✓ Strategy developments
- ✓ Industry coalitions
- ✓ Management teams
- ✓ Outsourcing relationships
- ✓ Projects and portfolio optimization
- ✓ Process design and reengineering
- ✓ Product development
- ✓ Partnerships and customer contracts
- ✓ Mergers and acquisitions

What Are The Benefits?

Quality of Outcomes

Those involved may take action confident that all are working from the same set of assumptions and goals.

Speed

Alignment Cycles enable groups to translate varied thought into a common plan of action in days rather than weeks

Efficiency

The AOT software enables participants to limit their involvement to a few high quality hours and avoid endless meetings.

How Is It Conducted?

We offer a *choice of formats* to suit your requirements:

- As an on-site workshop

- A completely virtual experience conducted using the internet and phone

- A hybrid of the above

Do it yourself after training, or *fully facilitated* by a certified Alignment Manager

To learn more about how to <u>*rapidly optimize*</u> the degree of alignment across your team

please e-mail: <u>info@schellingpoint.com</u> or visit us on the web at: www.schellingpoint.com