

What Are The 7 Rules of Alignment? Why Your Business Needs to Follow Them

By Ruth Schwartz



If you build a language that allows you to articulate what success looks like, your employees will align and order will reign supreme. The key to organization is consistent communication about your company, each and every time. This means you must remember to have a conversation with new hires, with each promotion, with each evaluation, and when adding any core or coordinating task to anyone's job. Clarity equals success.

The seven rules of alignment are the tools you can use to make your employees successful. They are the specific areas where people fail. If you are aware of them, and discuss all seven areas, you will avoid the pitfalls that result when communication is unclear.

Rule #1: Provide Job Descriptions. Whether for core work or coordinating work, people need a definition of their responsibilities. Many businesses provide a description, but this is where most stop. Job descriptions are only the beginning.

Rule #2: Establish Boundaries. What are the limitations for fulfilling the job? What is inside or outside the job's responsibilities? Discuss desired outcomes so that everyone involved knows what is expected of them.

Rule #3: Talk About Authority Levels. Let employees know if they should act when directed (do what I say), act after approval or consultation (we'll decide together), act and report (I just want to know) or act autonomously (I don't need to know). An honest conversation about where you think someone is and where you want them and where they want to be will be an eye-opener.

Rule #4: Discuss Time Constraints. How often, how long, deadlines, milestones all need to be clear and specific. Be sure employees understand the deadline and how often they need to perform.

Rule #5: Be Sure Knowledge and Skills Match the Task. Do people have the knowledge and skills to do the job? If not, when and how will they get them? Even when you want to stretch someone's ability, even when you know they have what it takes even when they may not, be sure to ask, "Do you think you have the skills and knowledge required for this task?" Talk about it. It may be what holds someone back, whether real or imagined.

Rule #6: Provide Information. Do people have all of the information they need? If not, can they obtain it? Sharing information within the company—even financially information—is critical and necessary if you want employees to thrive.

Rule #7: Provide Resources. Do people need tools, equipment, reports, and money to get the job done? Can they access to what they need? Create a safe place to ask and discuss. Sometimes people fail simply because they don't understand how they could use the people and resources available to them.

To ensure employee success, be sure to discuss all seven areas. Once you have the language for these seven areas of alignment within your company, you will become quicker and more comfortable with the process. If your job is making your team successful, this time spent talking, when people start their jobs, when people add new tasks, when people are in an evaluation process, will become second nature.

Ruth Schwartz started Mordam Records in 1983. By the time Nirvana hit the pop charts and Green Day went platinum, Schwartz was running a ten million-dollar company. In 2012 Schwartz chronicles her success in *The Key to the Golden Handcuff's – Stop Being a Slave to Your Business*. Published by Outskirts Press, and based on Schwartz' business experience, the book gives entrepreneurs and business executives insight into shifts that can be made to create a transparent, open-book company. Today, Schwartz is an internationally certified business coach, motivational speaker, and the facilitator of business peer advisory boards. She owns High Performance Advocates, a management development and marketing company. Contact Ruth through www.highperformanceadvocates.com or by calling 530-288-0180.