



# Indigo Path Collective

## Playbook

**Strategic Alignment**

# THE PLAYS

Align Your Team  
To Achieve  
Business  
Results



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# PLAY 1:

MAKE HUMAN RELATIONS A KEY EMPLOYER BRAND PRIORITY



## What is Human Relations?

Human Relations refers to the study of group productivity in the workplace. Although it is mostly unknown today, Human Relations is a formal field of practice that originated as a result of the 1930s landmark research that discovered the Hawthorne Effect. The study found that when you give people positive attention in the workplace by talking to them and helping them to see the big picture of what the company is trying to accomplish, they produce better results. And since all businesses need productive people, especially today, there could never be a more appropriate time to put a well engineered Human Relations practice at the center of your business strategy.

## Why is Human Relations important to a strategic alignment?

A sincere focus on Human Relations is essential to strategic alignment at any organization because it puts productivity at the center of your effort. The only reason a business has employees is to get work done; as such, Human Relations can propel your workplace productivity and boost financial results with a simple set of business tools.



# PLAY 2:

## TIGHTLY MANAGE YOUR ALIGNMENT PROGRAM



### **What is a strategic alignment?**

Strategic alignment is the process of pushing the business strategy out of the C-suite, to the leadership level and employees so that everyone is very aware of what the company is attempting to achieve. That cascade is followed by employees at every level identifying the tasks they are responsible for completing so that the strategy will be achieved.

### **Why is strategic alignment important to your business strategy?**

Your entire business is operated by employees. They must know what your company has set out to achieve, so they have context for the work they are doing and an ability to make strategy-based decisions in their day-to-day work. Without aligning all of your employees behind your business strategy, you will see large groups completely missing the market, major disagreements between business silos, and a higher level of turn over. Ultimately, humans are social and enjoy groups, but groups of people must have a purpose in order to be productive.

### **How do you align programs that achieve your business strategy?**

Aligning your employees with your business strategy is the best investment you can make. Why? It helps employees find meaning at work, helps your teams know who is responsible for which areas, and your employees to know exactly what they need to do.

- + Have a clear company strategy
- + Install alignment program and systems
- + Communicate the strategy in every message sent
- + Reward your leaders for their alignment efforts

# PLAY 3:

## HELP LEADERS MAKE ALIGNED BUSINESS PLANS



### **What are business plans?**

A business plan details what a group of employees will do together to achieve their part of the company's strategy. Typically, a business plan will identify the talent and technology that is needed to support customers successfully. It identifies the exact means through which a company will operate. These tend to have a section on customers and what the team's responsibility is in satisfying them. And, finally, it clearly expresses the expected financial outcome of the plan as well.

### **Why are aligned business plans critical to your success?**

Aligned business plans work much the same as music for an orchestra. Aligned business plans are neatly carved out of the business strategy, they don't overlap with other groups, and they work together across the business to ensure that what the company has set out to do in any given year is achieved.

### **How do you align business plans?**

Aligning business plans is not as hard as you think, but you have to give those responsible for building these plans the information, tools and support needed to be successful.

To align business plans:

- ❖ Give the overall strategy to your leaders
- ❖ Ask them to develop their business plans according to a template
- ❖ Post all business plans for review
- ❖ Ask leaders to work with other leaders to get rid of repetitive and overlapping tasks
- ❖ Ensure that every item on every plan is 100% focused on achieving the business strategy
- ❖ Insist on leaders presenting their plans to their teams for input and alignment

# PLAY 4:

## GIVE MANAGERS ALIGNMENT DECISION-MAKING TOOLS AND RESOURCES



### **What are alignment decision-making tools and resources?**

Alignment decision-making tools and resources come in many forms. Perhaps you'll have a Q&A document, talking points, flow charts or even people who are available to managers to help them make strategy-based decisions. However, without offering managers these types of tools and resources, you can't expect them to be able to make the types of decisions on a day-to-day basis that will enable the company to achieve its strategy.

### **Why are these tools and resources important?**

Everyone needs help in making the right decisions for the business. When you provide managers with the tools and resources they need to make the types of decisions the company deems to be correct, you can save precious time and money, as well as help managers better facilitate positive relationships with their teams. Giving managers what they need to operate the business in the way the strategy directs is critical.

### **How do you ensure managers use these tools and resources?**

- ❖ Ask managers which tools they would like and use
- ❖ Build what they asked for
- ❖ Create the information, tools and resources you know they will need
- ❖ Train managers to make strategy-based business decisions

# PLAY 5:

MAKE  
ALIGNMENT  
BIGGER THAN  
YOUR GOAL  
DOCUMENTATION  
SYSTEM



## What is a goal documentation system?

Every company that asks employees to complete a list of goals tends to have a system—online or otherwise—that they use to collect these documents. However, what happens more times than not is that the process of collection and meeting a deadline for collection becomes more important than the quality of the goals, let alone their contribution to the company's collective achievement of its strategy.

## Why is it important to make alignment bigger than goal documentation?

It is more important to focus on goal alignment than getting goals documented in a system because employees need to work only on the tasks that contribute to the company's strategy. When you focus on the system of collection, goals tend to become an HR program, and those tend to be focused mostly on the end game, which is performance reviews. In the end, the company may lose out on its achievement because we let the system drive the program, rather than the other way around. Besides, as you re-align the strategy all year round, goals change.

## How do you make alignment bigger?

- ❖ Spend a lot of time presenting the strategy and business plans to employees
- ❖ Talk to employees about what you need them to do to help achieve the business strategy through their teams and individually
- ❖ Create a campaign that stresses the importance of goal alignment and why it is good for the company and employee alike

# PLAY 6:

## TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES TO WORK ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT



### **Who should receive this training?**

Every employee from top to bottom should be trained to identify the type of work that contributes to the achievement of your company strategy. For many employees, particularly those who are not customer facing, they may not have a clear view of how their work contributes, but we all know that it does.

### **Why is it important to train employees to only work on what's important?**

Strategic alignment is not innately understood. You can't expect that employees, even the most senior of leaders, easily understand how to align or why it is important. And, as your company shifts its strategy throughout the year to keep up with customer demands, knowing that each business unit, team and employee must also realign may not be in the realm of common sense. So, when you train employees to identify what's most important based on the strategy, you will find that employees at every level make better business decisions and your strategy is more readily achieved.

### **What should be included in this training?**

Train your employees to:

- ❖ Understand the company strategy
- ❖ Develop business plans
- ❖ Align their tasks and goals
- ❖ Get rid of needless, overlapping or low-return activities
- ❖ Communicate openly and honestly
- ❖ Use the information, tools and resources you send to them



# PLAY 7:

## GET INPUT AT EVERY LEVEL



### What is input?

Input is the information you get from your employees every day. When you ask for their opinion on something, they are giving you input. Seems straight forward right? Well, the issue today is that far too many companies don't ask for input or have a system through which employees can provide it in a way companies can manage it. So, when you ask for input, be ready in advance with a system that can help you collect and utilize this goldmine of data.

### Why is it important to get input from all levels of employees?

Input from all levels of employees is critical to the successful achievement of your business strategy for two important reasons:

- ❖ Practical experience: Your employees have the most hands-on experience in your company doing a specific task. They know what will work and have a lot of information to provide to you to ensure your success.
- ❖ Buy-in: Everyone wants to have his or her voice heard when it comes to the work they are doing. Give employees a chance to provide input, and they will know they were heard and more readily implement the strategy the company needs to win.

### How can you get input from such a large group of people?

- ❖ Present the strategy to all employees, get feedback and adjust
- ❖ Have managers write business plans, present to their teams, get feedback and adjust
- ❖ Ask employees to write their task lists for the year, present to their managers, get feedback and adjust

# PLAY 8:

## MEET REGULARLY TO EMPHASIZE BUSINESS STRATEGY



### **What is meant by meeting regularly?**

Meeting regularly simply means that in every meeting between employees—one-on-ones or in groups—the meeting is designed specifically to work on the achievement of the strategy, align based on strategy updates, or report strategy achievements. The strategy needs to be the basis of everything every employee does.

### **Why is it important to meet regularly to emphasize business strategy?**

Face-to-face meetings are critically important in the discussion of business strategy. You likely already have these types of meetings on a regular basis, such as one-on-one meetings with managers, team meetings, business unit meetings or even all-hands meetings. What you might not have is a structure for these meetings that is based entirely on the strategy the team is attempting to achieve. When you turn every one of these meetings into a strategy discussion session—introducing strategy, strategy updates, achievement of strategy—your emphasis on the business strategy cannot be missed. Soon enough, your employees will all be entirely focused on achieving the strategy for the business, because that is all they are talking about.

### **How do you emphasize business strategy in meetings?**

- + Have a standard agenda for all-employee meetings that is based in the strategy
- + Start team meetings by recognizing a person or group that has achieved some part of the strategy
- + End every meeting with a Q&A session that is open to all questions about the strategy

# PLAY 9:

## CONTINUOUSLY COMMUNICATE STRATEGIC WINS



### **What is a continuous communication?**

Continuous communications sounds like a radio program that you just can't turn off. But in this case, we mean that every communication that goes out to employees at all levels be connected to the strategy. For example, if you are telling employees about a fancy new benefits program, show them how it relates directly to the strategy the company is attempting to achieve. If there is no connection whatsoever, not even a loose connection, question if this is a communication—and program—that is actually important for the company to implement.

### **Why is continuous communication important?**

People forget things all of the time. However, if you keep the business strategy front and center in all communications, and repeat the message often, employees will understand why it is important and also helps them to realize how critical all decisions made by the company are to the business strategy.

### **How do you continuously communicate?**

- ❖ Send emails that connect what is being communicated and the business strategy together
- ❖ Post strategy posters in all of your conference rooms
- ❖ Design your intranet to reflect the strategy rather than your business silos
- ❖ Set up an enterprise social networking group for each item on the strategy
- ❖ Ask leaders to walk the floor and talk to employees about what strategic activities they are working on

# PLAY 10:

## MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS



### **What is measurement?**

Measurement is how you determine whether your strategic alignment program is a success. You should consider both short and long-term metrics. After all, it can take some time for a program to fully take hold.

### **Why is measurement important to the strategic alignment?**

Measuring the success of your strategic alignment program is important for a number of reasons:

- ❖ It allows you to adjust the program over time to optimize the return on the company's investment
- ❖ You can prove that strategic alignment program contributes to employee productivity
- ❖ You can show the impact of your program on revenue and expense
- ❖ You can achieve your business strategy year-over-year

### **How can you measure the success of strategic alignment?**

- ❖ The business strategy is achieved in full
- ❖ Employee and customer satisfaction surveys
- ❖ Focus groups
- ❖ Productivity Indices
- ❖ Quarterly revenue and expense reports

# Indigo Path Collective

Healthy  
Workplaces  
Produce Superior  
Results

## Put our experience to work for you.

Indigo Path Collective is a corporate and community human relations consulting firm. We focus on helping our clients build healthy and productive workplaces that deliver tangible business results through leadership, decision making, corporate social structures, and effective communication. We counsel executives and managers to be massively effective and help organizations build high-performing teams, renew corporate cultures and design programs that increase employee fulfillment and steward change.

## We can help you to:

- ❖ Design your wellness program
- ❖ Develop a wellness campaign
- ❖ Manage your wellness special events
- ❖ Train managers to be effective wellness stewards

## Contact us to get started today.

Indigo Path Collective

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