

D.I.A.L.O.G.

Successful organizations are continually looking for ways and areas to improve in order to gain a competitive advantage. Two critical questions that are often asked by senior management are: 1) How do we know that resources are being properly allocated? 2) How can we better utilize our limited resources? These questions moved us to examine the whole issue of what are the critical elements which contribute to organizational success. As a result of this examination, we discovered that when an organization's systems and departments are aligned, their ability to succeed is greater. We know that the interrelationships of processes and departments within an organization are an important element in determining overall success. If the marketing and R&D departments are both strong but they are not working together, the result will be the identification of products or services that no one wants. By the same token, if an organization's structure does not support its strategy, the organization is out of alignment and the strategy will probably not be achieved. Organizations that learn to identify new relationships between what they do and the results they seek can further increase the gap between themselves and their competitors. This is important in today's business environment. Constant radical change, uncertainty, new rules and regulations, increased customer demands, and "alphabet soup programs" intensify our daily business environment. How to manage and thrive under these conditions depends a great deal upon how well your organization is aligned. ■

What Is D.I.A.L.O.G.?

D.I.A.L.O.G (Data Indicating Alignment of Organizational Goals) is an organizational assessment tool that provides information as to how well critical elements are working together to achieve business and strategic goals. It also identifies which of these critical elements are working against you. Our approach is unique in that we measure the interrelationships or the essential elements which become predictors of future strengths. We are not concerned with measuring communication for communications sake, but rather how effectively is an organization communicating with its employees. As such, our approach is outcome-focused, rather than simply measuring irrelevant activities. ■

How to Get Started

First, senior management must decide that there is a need for data in order to better understand their organization. Second, they must be committed to using this data to better allocate their resources to improve results. After these important steps, an approach can be developed to gather data from the organization. ■

Gathering the Data

Two methods are utilized in gathering organizational data: personal interviews and a questionnaire survey. Personal interviews are conducted by trained facilitators to gain an understanding of the intensity of feelings within the organization. The survey is used to gather the depth of understanding and the views of the employees, and to determine directional trends.

Key Areas of Interest

There are seven critical areas that are measured. After years of research and validation these seven areas have been found to be those with the greatest impact upon the development of organizational effectiveness. They are also the seven areas that have been identified by National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and make up the Criteria for Performance Excellence as used in the Baldrige National Quality Program.

Key Activities

- Personal Interviews
- Administration of D.I.A.L.O.G Tools
- Scoring of Responses
- Presentation of Results
- Discussion of Positive and Negative Influences
- Gap Analysis and Directional Recommendations