
Delivering Competitive Advantage



Through
Real Change Leaders



AlignOrg Solutions is a boutique consulting firm that specializes in helping clients clarify strategy, design and align organization systems and choices, and lead transformational change to drive growth and marketplace success. Using our powerful methodology and a flexible approach that engages leaders and employees in decision-making, we assist many of the most well-respected and successful organizations around the world with achieving real, transformational change. The expertise we bring is grounded in the practical realities of everyday business challenges and is designed to create insight and action.

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Just because an individual is brilliant at running a business doesn't mean that the same individual will be great at leading change. Different skills sets are involved. Real change seldom happens by chance—successful organizational change requires skilled change leadership.

Most of us have been in an organization where a change process has failed. Sometimes those efforts were unfocused and sloppy, without any serious resources invested in the change process. Those efforts seemed doomed to fail. But sometimes there was a compelling vision and a carefully crafted design, sometimes the organization invested significant amounts of time and money and involved some very capable people. And the change effort still fell apart in practice. When we truly commit to a change initiative, part of our investment must be in identifying, evaluating, and developing the leaders who can see it through to success.

What is real change?

REAL CHANGE SATISFIES THREE CONDITIONS:

1. The change makes sense for the organization—it creates competitive advantage.
2. The change quickly becomes part of real work, not an alternate structure to be imposed from the top or from outside.
3. A strong (influential, active, involved) and aligned leadership team with a clearly stated vision of success is engaged in the change process.

It can be helpful to think of change as a *process*, a series of interconnected steps leading to a desired outcome. **Real Change Leaders** understand that each step counts and connects to the next, but that course corrections are possible.

Real Change Leaders Demonstrate 6 Best Practices of Change

1 Real Change Leaders are vision-driven.

For change to succeed, members of the organization must understand and be emotionally committed to the end goal. **Real Change Leaders** communicate a compelling picture of the future, an aspirational vision that is grounded in customer needs and stakeholder requirements. Their vision energizes, unifies, and realigns others over the course of the change process.

2 They recognize the need for change champions at all levels.

Change champions, or vigorous advocates, must influence others in all levels of the organization. The leadership team must champion change, but that is not sufficient. Department leaders, team leaders, and front-line workers must also become vigorous advocates of change.

3 They honor the primacy of customers.

In contrast to *change for the sake of change* or a leader's pet project, **Real Change Leaders** seek *change for the sake of customers*. This applies not only to external customers, but to internal customers. Internal customers work together in a customer-supplier chain to deliver a superior service or product to the end customer of the organization. Change leaders make sure the inputs are of the type and quality needed for the next step in the customer-supplier chain and that they lead to what the ultimate customer wants and needs.

4 They commit.

Real change leaders dig in for the long haul. They are not content to try one thing, then another, to see what sticks. They carefully evaluate the direction that is needed and then stay the course. As one leader said in the early stages of implementing a new time and revenue tracking system: “We are not moving into this new way of doing things to try it out, to see if it fits for us, to see if it is going to work. We are moving into this to *make it work*.” That kind of commitment inspired others’ commitment throughout the organization so as obstacles arose, the change process continued forward.

5 They treat change as both logical and emotional.

People in organizations act according to logic; they also act according to emotion. Logical aspects of change include things like goal setting, defining roles and responsibilities, and risk analysis. Emotional aspects include things like dealing with loss of status and turf, managing ambiguity, resolving conflict, building trust, clearing the air as needed, forming new working relationships, and moving on.

The logical aspects of change supply direction; the emotional aspects supply energy and staying power. **Real Change Leaders** harness both.

6 They model the change they desire in others.

By doing this, they serve as an example for others to follow. And they gain a richer understanding of what it means in real-time to act in the new way, which often means coping with some discomfort. Through this, they are prepared to offer insightful and compelling coaching to others to help them move in the same direction.

The Competencies and Behaviors of Real Change Leaders

AlignOrg Solutions helps business leaders and HR professionals identify, evaluate, and develop **Real Change Leaders** for every stage of change, from inception through implementation. We focus both on team and individual leadership and evaluate different dimensions from multiple perspectives.

We have identified 5 competencies of **Real Change Leaders**, which enable them to engage in the best practices of change. We have incorporated these competencies into a Change Leadership Survey. We evaluate these dimensions to understand each individual's proficiency level: *Learning, Needs Support, Valued Contributor, or Change Leader*. Then individualized coaching, training, and support can be adapted to help develop each leader.

Change Innovator:

Seeks diverse inputs and proposes innovative ways to move the desired change forward.

- Asks provocative questions to intentionally challenge the status quo.
- Articulates refreshing perspectives about new possibilities and suggests original, break-through solutions to former constraints or untapped market potential, resetting boundaries to a broader view of possibilities.
- Builds a diverse team, leveraging different perspectives and cultivating a risk-tolerant environment.

Change Architect:

Connects change to strategic priorities and business plan requirements, while making the change effort relevant in everyday work.

- Aligns change goals with the organization's strategic design choices and matches resources and capabilities accordingly.
- Leverages change activities to create strategic differentiation in the marketplace.
- Transforms long-term change milestones into short-term (weekly or monthly) targets and finds ways to make the change relevant to everyday work.

Change Facilitator:

Finds creative ways to involve and support key people in bringing about influence for change.

- Recognizes and brings together key individuals with strong capabilities to successfully enact change.
- Creates cross-functional teams to assist with the change, unifying them around a shared vision.
- Identifies and involves those with positional or social influence to support and remove barriers for the change team.

Change Communicator:

Practices honest, open, and timely communication, clearly describing the vision, benefits, and how the change will take place.

- Articulates the need for change in a way that everyone in the organization can understand it and rally behind it.
- Illustrates a clear vision of the positive benefits the organization can gain from the change and brings it down to the level of the positive effects on individuals.
- Communicates how people should expect the change will roll out, setting realistic expectations so obstacles can be anticipated and overcome.

Change Exemplar:

Makes personal and behavioral changes necessary to be an example of the changes that are needed in the organization.

- Understands and uses visible, symbolic acts to illustrate that there has been a tangible shift in direction.
- Acts as a role model of the new behaviors needed and is visible and passionate in his/her public support for the change effort.
- Creates a sense of urgency around needed organizational change, encouraging others to embrace a new way of working.

Because leaders are part of a team, leadership teams need to improve their ability to drive lasting change. Setting up the right change structures and mechanisms to address both the logical and emotional aspects of change reinforces an individual leader's best efforts. **Real Change Leaders** working as part of a Real Change Leadership Team can deliver lasting competitive advantage.

Helping Leaders and Teams Become Real Change Leaders

These 5 change leadership competencies help define how organizational transformational success can be achieved. Many leaders tasked with heading up a significant change effort lack experience and training in leading transformations. CEOs and executives are often unrealistic, expecting leaders to know how to manage change without offering any tools or guidance. Leaders and their leadership teams can accelerate and magnify their impact as they become and function as **Real Change Leaders** or Real Change Leadership Teams.



Learn what it takes to deliver competitive advantage by becoming a **Real Change Leader**.

How can you develop Real Change Leader competencies?

How do I get my leadership team to become a Real Change Leadership Team?

At AlignOrg Solutions, we help organizations establish the structure, process, and tools to succeed in change leadership. In the context of these 5 competency areas, we evaluate both individuals and teams to identify their strengths and weaknesses in leading transformations. Together we focus on how to mitigate the areas of greatest concern, helping leaders and their teams develop tactical plans with clear ownership. We provide tools, process guidance, and insightful coaching to help them become **Real Change Leaders**.



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