

“What Are We Doing?”

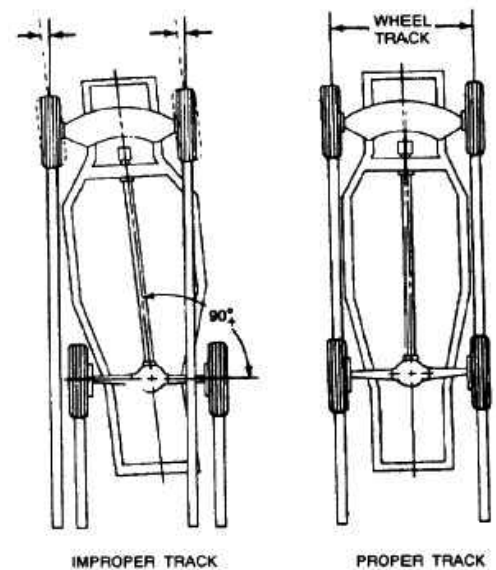
The second of the seven questions we ask clients to face is, “What Are We Doing?” There is sometimes quite a gulf between what business leaders say their company is doing, what the managers say the company is doing—what the employees say they are doing, and what is really being happening.

News flash: There is always separation between the answers and reality.

Have you ever seen a car with badly aligned wheels traveling down the road? When you follow from behind it looks like the car is driving sideways. Companies can be misaligned like cars. Look at your organization; can you see where leadership is out of touch with the customer? Does the warehouse understand their role in serving the customer? How far is the communication of purpose out of alignment in your company?

No company has perfect alignment between the top executives and the lowest ranks. But the best in class companies can demonstrate a **tighter tolerance of understanding** between leadership and the work floor, a unity of vision in the strategy, tactics and execution. Alignment is an indicator of overall business enterprise effectiveness. Alignment is a strong indicator of problems within a company. Alignment may not be able to pinpoint the root cause of problems, but it often can point in the direction where the problems lie.

In the ever-changing world of business, great business leaders keep their people executing the strategic and tactical goals of the business. While these leaders deemphasize hierarchy and distribute authority, they keep an eye on the strategy and tactics messages of the enterprise. They put measurements of effectiveness in place to understand how well the company executes against the tactical and strategy goals. Those leaders make sure that progress the effectiveness of the progress gets reported. Great leaders have candid conversation with their companies about performance.



REAR WHEELS MUST TRACK CORRECTLY

Asking the question “What are we doing?” throughout the organization allows leaders at every level to compare their actions with their understanding of the company’s vision. When the alignment is outside of tolerance, the right information, knowledge, and customer data is missing in the organization.

The new business reality of changing customer requirements, turbulent competitive forces, and weakened bonds of loyalty between an organization and its people magnifies the pain of misalignment.

To obtain breakthrough results, the leaders of a business enterprise must link the five key elements of an organization: people, process, customers, business strategies, and leadership. A company that serves loyal customers to create sustained growth and profit, aligned from top to bottom, is a high performance enterprise

Beyond internal alignment, “What Are We Doing?” is a question of awareness. Many companies are blind to the pain that they create for their customers and themselves. In our process we ask the customers, “What Are They Doing?”—that is, what is our client doing for their customers? That single question opens the floodgates of information—sometimes not information the client wants to hear or believe. “What Are They Doing?” can focus on the positive and the negative, and its a much better gauge of customer happiness than “How Are They Doing?”

“What Are They Doing” opens the door for the next question we want our clients to ask: “What Do We *Want* To Do?”

