



By Richard D. Czerniawski

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION IN OR OUT OF ALIGNMENT?

If asked the question whether your organization or extended brand team (including those functional groups that support it) are in alignment, I venture your answer would be a resounding “YES!” I believe it’s because most managers in organizations perceive alignment as being “in agreement.” Virtually all of us acknowledge our agreement to strategies driven by consensus—namely, those in which we participated in forging or approving.

However, agreement is a necessary but small part of the bigger picture that comprises alignment. To me, alignment necessitates all functional units supporting the enterprise (regardless if it’s the company or brand) *to develop and execute sub-strategies consistent with, and essential to realizing the overarching plan—the marketing or launch plan. Moreover, the programs and execution of all functional areas need to be integrated and coordinated to reach critical mass in the proper timeframes essential to achieving the strategic plan and target Business Objectives (i.e., sales, market share, and profit targets).* If not, then despite agreement to stated goals and strategies, the organization is out of alignment.

This has been brought home to me by the failure of many launch brands to achieve their first-year target objectives. We could attribute these failures to poor distribution of, or access to, the product; poor quality of production; inadequate inventories; a misaligned salesforce call pattern; poor or late product training—among others. Regardless of the functional area and specific shortcoming, they suggest a misalignment of effort and absence of achieving critical mass where and when it counts.

The battlefield provides a simple analogy. For the ground forces to storm the beaches, the Navy has to get them there. They need to be supported by a battery of fire from ships offshore. Air support needs to come in at the right time to strike the correct targets. Despite representing different armed forces, the efforts of each need to be integrated and coordinated to achieve the master plan and the plan for each functional contributor. If not, then the result is a “Bay of Pigs.”

When retail distribution isn't what it should be (i.e., an insufficient level at a given point of time), any broad-scale advertising is wasted or, at minimum, inefficient. When access isn't what it should be, then HCPs will either not prescribe or, worse yet, be turned off from writing further prescriptions when access is denied their patients. When customers face back orders, or customer handling issues, or product quality problems, our plan falls apart. This is not a rare occurrence. It happens every day.

We need the entire organization to align with the marketing plan. Perhaps, it is a misnomer to call it a marketing plan. It's our enterprise plan, led by marketing. Each of the functional areas needs to participate much like the members of a symphony. All must come together to make beautiful music behind the leadership of the conductor. The marketing planner is and should be that conductor.

The coronavirus, given the need for social distancing, poses challenges to gaining alignment to our plans. However, it is leading us to find new, amazing ways to communicate and align our efforts. Let's look at a torture test for alignment. If a symphony orchestra must maintain physical distancing, then how might they share their talent in bringing us Ravel's Bolero? It is one thing to be in alignment with what the orchestra will play on this day, but it is an entirely another matter to bring it together into a harmonious whole that delights its audience. Here's the Royal Symphony of France playing Bolero de Ravel https://youtu.be/Sj4pE_bgRQI Appreciate what it truly means to be "in alignment." While you are at it, enjoy the music they make and share. This is what we must strive to achieve with all functional areas of the team—planning and executing in alignment.

Learn more about how to make your marketing matter more. Check out my new book: <http://bdn-intl.com/avoiding-critical-marketing-errors>

Stay SAFE and be well!

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