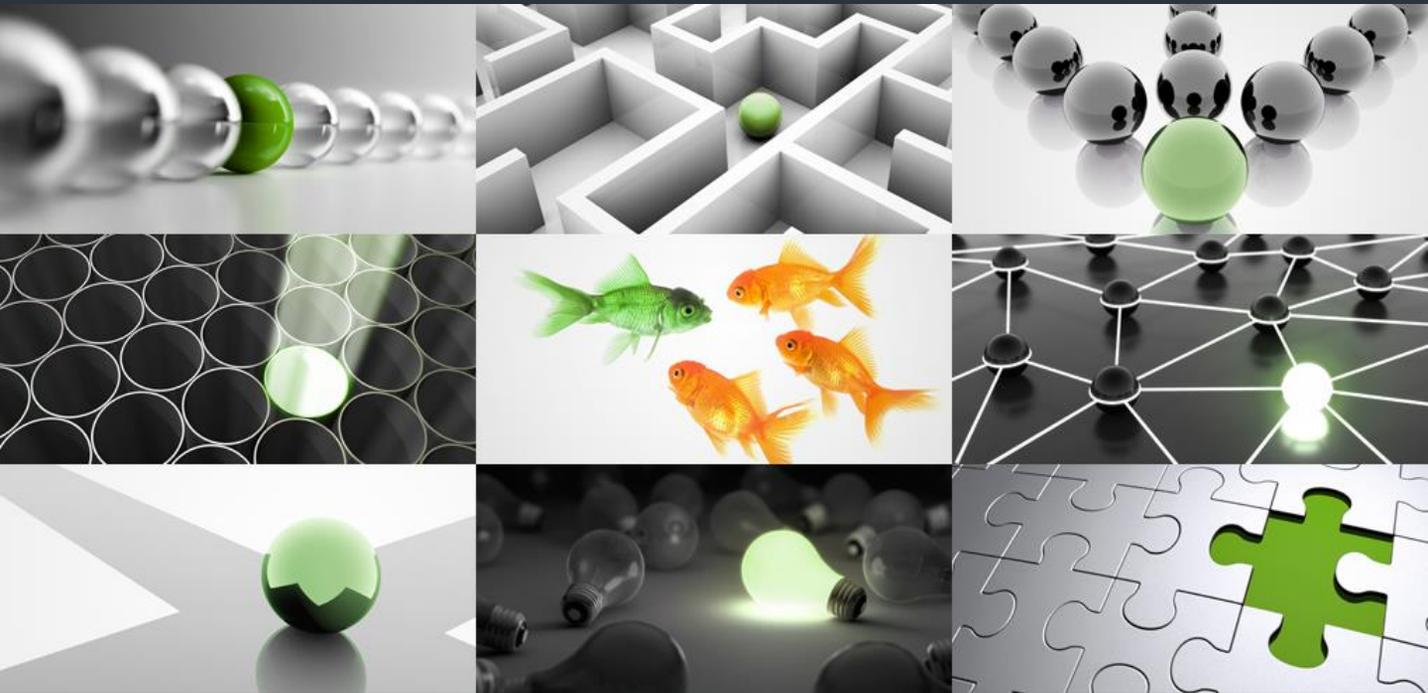


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people solutions for business



# Rialto Whitepaper:

## Strategy, Engagement and Alignment

*Driving the ROI of your business*

Author: Alistair Denton

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# 1. Introduction

This white paper reviews the importance of ensuring that:

- There is a firm connection between the needs and requirements of customers
- The impact that these should have on the business strategy definition of an organisation
- The approach to ensuring that there is a clear understandable structure to the implementation of the strategic objectives, the proactive approach to manager and employees engagement in the process of strategy
- Finally the creation of a culture of performance management and monitoring is so key to the success of any business today and in the future..

# 2. Customer Focus and Satisfaction

While it is important to discuss customer service and satisfaction at a generic level, organisations have so many touch points that pockets of poor performance or low standards of delivery can easily go undetected. And in the 24-7 business environment in which we operate, it only takes one less-than-satisfactory customer interaction for an organisation's reputation to take a nosedive. Minutes, after all, is all that it takes for someone to share a bad experience online, and switch to a competitor.

For business leaders, achieving and sustaining outstanding customer service hinges on acquiring a high level of understanding of both internal processes and clients. Leaders must ensure that they and their senior managers precisely understand what happens at each point of interaction between the organisation and client in each of their different functions. In our changing world, relying on standard customer surveys and other traditional feedback mechanisms won't necessarily set organisations on the path to service excellence. For example, the collected data may show that the customer service team has achieved record low call-waiting times but online deliveries of goods are repeatedly late for customers in one area of the country because of a poor-performing driver.

The starting point for customer experience improvement is to map the customer journey from end-to-end, making sure all of the touch points in the organisation are covered. Identify where the pain points lie in the process. Decisive interventions can then be put in place to address the issue(s) and ultimately drive operational excellence in this area. Achieving this level of understanding will also enable organisations to explore how things could be done differently to achieve competitive edge.

Secondly, leaders should encourage their function heads to honestly assess what level of customer service is being delivered to clients and to take ownership of the processes involved. Rate individual departments on a scale of 10 and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Ask clients to do the same via a customised customer survey. Align questions with the customer experience expected from each different function. For instance, for sales, it could be along the lines of: 'how did we fare when we first contacted you to talk about our products and services?' Comparing these external and internal ratings should provide an accurate indication as to whether there is a problem.

The third aspect is around engaging employees to achieve higher performance. Service excellence relies on having committed employees who care passionately about what they do. They must recognise that putting customer service and satisfaction programmes is at the top of the business agenda. All too often, such initiatives come in response to something that has gone wrong.

Organisations need to make the shift towards putting in place proactive programmes that aim to improve performance and move the organisation towards operational and service excellence. This won't happen overnight so efforts need to be sustained. In some cases, it will be achieved by incremental rather than wholesale improvements.

Driving higher performance in the area of customer service involves drilling down to the detail. It is a big ask given the disparate and geographically dispersed nature of many organisations – not to mention the increasing rise of remote workforces – but a challenge that must be confronted head-on and the lessons learnt need then to be taken into the Strategic planning process to ensure that the businesses strategic objectives can be linked back to the customer at all times

## 3. Business Strategy Development and Implementation

In order to have an excellent solution or service to deliver though, a similarly thorough assessment of what the organisation's strategic objectives need to be to position the business as a leader in its sector needs to be carried out.

All businesses will claim to know what their competition is doing, what's happening in their market(s), what customers expect as well as who are the new kids on the block that could threaten their patch. How many leaders reading this though can honestly claim that they regularly analyse their market and, crucially, use the data to inform their business strategy?

Businesses today operate in highly competitive, complex and global marketplaces and gaining full understanding of what is happening in your sector – and what is likely to happen – in the future, is the only way senior leaders can ensure their business strategy remains up-to-date and relevant.

Having understood the dynamics changing the market place today and in the future, it is important to segment the different customer sectors within your market and assess how you will serve them. These could be large or small, domestic or international. Whatever binds these customers together though, leaders must examine how well developed their products and services are to serve the needs of each one if they are to increase the probability of sales. Are you viewed as market leader in one but not in others, for instance? Where do improvements need to be made? And can you add value to an existing product and service for a particular group?

These findings then need to be converted into clear strategic priorities for each of the departments of the business. Ranking them in importance will help to form a roadmap of short-, medium- and long-term priorities that will help you achieve your business strategy goals.

The next step is to assess what changes need to be made to implement the strategy and how it will be driven through. What change or transformation projects need to be created? Should there

be greater focus on innovation? What people, culture and organisational changes are required to ensure they happen. This should provide a foundation to then engage managers and get them to think about the performance criteria for the people in their departments and what skills and behaviours are required.

# 4. Manager and Employee Engagement

Even though each manager and their department may have its own objectives and priorities, the heads of each one should discuss how best they can support one another. Business leaders must ensure each function head has clarity over their particular area of responsibility and that they take ownership of it. Make it known they will be asked questions about how they and their teams are progressing with regard to the changes within a set timeframe.

It is the responsibility of individual managers to engage their people with the various change projects but leaders must ensure they are creating a positive environment regarding the changes and not a negative one that will quickly lead to demotivation. Employees need to feel they are going to be working in a world that they helped to create and that this brings benefits for themselves, not simply for the organisation and its customers.

Each of the stages of this process includes the identification of the key measures of performance for the team and individuals within it, the activity that the manager will undertake to ensure individual and team engagement, the involvement by the team in proactively identifying the skills required today and in the future to ensure success and finally how they will support and help other functions to also achieve service excellence for the customer and themselves. These steps are designed to help build a sustainable structure that enables leaders to develop and implement a business strategy that is perfectly aligned with the needs of customers. Get it right and the organisation and its people will have every chance of remaining competitive.

## 5. Performance Management and Monitoring

All of the above are key drivers to the success of implementing alignment of purpose of an organisation, however keeping a close eye on ensuring the successful implementation of the actions and projects is key to creating a performance management culture and environment. To do this it is important to set goals, structure ownership, measure success and ensure delivery. All these components are important in ensuring your business is not one of the organisations referred to by Forbes magazine who stated that;

1. 65% of organisations have an agreed upon strategy
2. Less than 14% of employees are engaged in the strategy
3. Less than 10% of organisations deliver the goals they set out to

Ensure your business focuses on the client needs and requirements who in turn drive the strategic objectives of the business and then that the leadership set the structure for ensuring the strategy is implemented, managers and employees are engaged in the change and that the performance of the business is monitored and reviewed to steer the ship to success.

## 6. Further Information

For further information or to explore how our capabilities and IP could assist you in your landscape further please call the Rialto team on 020 3043 8652 or email [rchiumento@rialtoconsultancy.com](mailto:rchiumento@rialtoconsultancy.com)

Rialto specialises in unique change management and transformation solutions which deliver exceptional results. We provide a range of services and interventions associated with the entire people agenda

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