

framework ³—a roadmap for guiding mutual engagement in shared diagnosis—should help to identify all the key variables that impact the performance of an organization. But it must do more. None of these elements, after all, exist in a vacuum. Just think: employee behaviors are shaped by organizational structure, which in turn, must find success within an ever-shifting external environment.

Building a Vocabulary of Change Diagnostic framework
a roadmap to analyzing alignment that makes explicit both the key elements of an organization that need to be aligned and the interconnections and interdependencies among those elements.

Understanding that organizations exist in constant interaction with a dynamic external environment leads to an important insight: An organization whose internal processes are perfectly well suited for one kind of competitive environment may find those same processes becoming a burden in a new, shifting landscape.

Theory into Practice

In order to set the stage for effective implementation, diagnosis can do more than target-specific elements of the organization; it can focus on the entire organization.

Take the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI built its reputation by battling crime and arresting criminals. The mission of the FBI—“G-men battling notorious criminals”—created a context and a set of structures and policies that gave absolute priority to criminal investigations and special agents in the field. A highly decentralized structure allowed agents to focus their attentions locally. Additionally, the FBI preferred internally generated data, often disdusting and rejecting information supplied by external agencies and sources.

The attacks of 9/11 on New York and Washington triggered a change in the strategy of the FBI. Gathering information and preventing an attack—that was the new strategic task. Recognizing that the new mission would require altered patterns of thinking and behaving, FBI Director Robert Mueller took steps to transform the bureau.

When organizations such as the FBI attempt to undergo strategic renewal, leaders can call on a diagnostic framework to focus attention on the multiple elements that contribute to success. But an effective framework can do more; it can delineate and help make explicit the interactions and interconnects among the elements. If employee behaviors do not reflect strategy—let’s say, in the case of the FBI, field agents concentrating most of their efforts on low-priority national threats, or, in other cases, salespeople spending most of their time selling products that are no longer core to the company’s strategy, or functional employees continuing to work mainly within their functions rather than across functions when the company’s strategy calls for rapid new product development—a framework can drive employees into analyzing the linkages that have created those misalignments.

Theory into Practice

Use a common organizational framework to shape mutual engagement and shared diagnosis.

No framework can, of course, explicate all the interconnects, causes and effects, and actions and reactions that occur within an organization and impact performance. That is why relying on a framework is only a preliminary step in the diagnosis. Mutual engagement and open, honest dialogue will build on the framework and enrich participants’ understanding of organizational dynamics.

There are numerous frameworks available for judging alignment. ⁴ Exhibit 3-1 ⁵ offers one such framework. The goal of any framework is to provide a common guide to participants as they seek to understand the interconnected linkages that affect organizational performance. Exhibit 3-1 ⁶ summarizes the criteria that, according to David Nadler, any useful framework should adhere to. ⁵ What makes a framework effective is that it leads people toward systemic thinking that

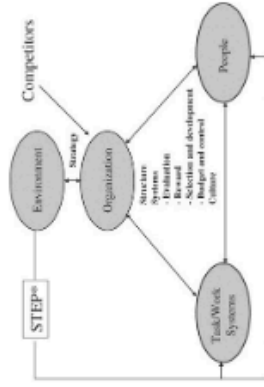


Exhibit 3-1 Diagnostic Framework¹

¹Source: Paul R. Lawrence, *Organizational Dynamics*, and Richard D. Invernizzi.

¹ This organizational design framework and analytic model has been adapted from a number of writers on the contingency theory of organizations: James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967); Paul R. Lawrence and J. W. Lorsch, *Organization and Environment* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1969); Jay R. Galbraith, *Designing Complex Organizations* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973); Jay W. Lorsch and John J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Jay R. Galbraith, *Organization Design: Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1977*; Jay W. Lorsch, "Organization Design: A Situational Perspective," *Organizational Dynamics*, 5 (1977) American Management Association, 1977; Jay R. Galbraith and Daniel A. Nathanson, *Strategy Implementation: The Role of Structure and Process* (St. Paul, MN: West, 1978); John P. Kotter, Leonard A. Schlesinger, and Vijay Sathe, "Organization Design Tools," *Organization: Text, Cases and Readings on the Management of Organizational Design and Change* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1979). See also H. W. Lane, "Systems, Values and Action: An Analytic Framework for Intercultural Management Research," *Management International Review* 20, no. 3 (1980), pp. 61-70.

can focus diagnosis on disjunctions that are impeding implementation of the renewed strategy and achievement of outstanding performance. A framework helps employees understand that outstanding performance can be achieved or sustained only with alignment between and among all the elements. It builds a common understanding and language that can form the basis of a shared diagnosis.