

# FRICTION INDEX

Building Organizational Health to  
Remove the Hidden Tax That  
Slows Your Team Down



In partnership with





# Building The Ultimate Competitive Advantage



You've just uncovered where hidden friction is slowing down execution in your organization. At its core, organizational health remains the ultimate competitive advantage—because no strategy, technology, or market edge can outpace a healthy team working in alignment.

The Friction Index™ builds on that truth by exposing the hidden tax that undermines health and slows execution. Think of it as more than a score—it's a map. It shows you the gaps where clarity breaks down, where execution stalls, where decisions bottleneck, where energy drains, and where culture erodes.

On the pages ahead, you'll find practical steps to transform these insights into momentum, helping your team move faster, stay aligned, and thrive with the full advantage of organizational health.

Below you'll find the **4 Frictions** (gaps) that hinder Organizational Health. Scroll down to find the discipline that you scored lowest on and implement the practical steps.



# 1. The Cohesion Gap



## Misalignment at the top leaves the layers below to fight unwinnable battles.

If your Friction Index Score indicates Cohesion might be your lowest score, we understand! Even the strongest teams can start to drift apart. One decision at a time, one conversation at a time—leaders begin to pull in slightly different directions. Misalignment at the top creates confusion at every level below. When leadership teams drift, you feel it everywhere:

- Mixed messages sent to the rest of the org
- Unaddressed conflict or concerns
- Priorities that conflict across departments
- Slow decision-making or chronic second-guessing
- A lack of accountability that starts at the top

This is what we call Cohesion Friction—when a group of leaders are still meeting but no longer moving together. And the only way back to alignment...is with intention.



## Tips for Building Cohesion

### 1. Understand One Another's Working Styles

To build trust, leaders must help their teams avoid making unproductive judgments about one another and instead leverage the diverse approaches and perspectives of the team. We suggest the Working Genius, a productivity tool that helps each member identify the parts of a project where they're naturally gifted and derive the most energy. Awareness of one collective preferences, skills, attitudes and potential blind spots, accelerate trust by speeding up the process of team members getting to know one another.



### 2. Share Personal Histories

Sharing personal histories with one another will help team members understand one another's backgrounds. Just by having everyone describe relatively innocuous attributes or experiences, team members will begin to relate to one another on a more personal basis, and see one another as human beings with life stories and interesting backgrounds. This encourages greater empathy and understanding, and discourages unfair and inaccurate behavioral attributions.

### 3. Implement the Team Effectiveness Exercise

The team effectiveness exercise provides a forum for quick and effective exchange of feedback. Ask team members to identify and communicate one another's positive attributes and areas of improvement. By doing so, teams can quickly and constructively surface issues that might take months to address using a more formal, and potentially divisive 360-degree program.

### 4. Create Behavioral Norms

Once you align on priorities and culture, define an align around 3-4 expected behaviors. Then practice them, rehearse them, and model them. Leadership is what you tolerate and what you celebrate.



## 2. The Clarity Gap

Leadership team must clarify what the organization believes, where it is headed, and what it needs to accomplish in order to succeed. Failure to reinforce clarity can show up like this:



- Hiring, performance reviews, compensation, and promotions don't align with stated values or strategic goals.
- Core values hang on the wall—but not in how people are hired, fired, or evaluated.
- Leadership meetings drift from priorities and behaviors established in Disciplines 2 and 3.
- Weekly or staff meetings don't reinforce the thematic goal or key objectives.
- Core values are referenced less and less—until they're forgotten.
- Leaders start tolerating misaligned behavior because there's no consistent reinforcement loop.
- Team members begin modeling behavior that earns rewards—not behavior that matches clarity.
- Frontline teams revert to old patterns, wondering, “Was that just a flavor-of-the-month?”

If you scored low in **creating clarity**, it is recommended that you discuss the questions on the next page.



## Tips for Building Clarity



# Enhancing Clarity and Alignment: Key Actions

### 1.. Answer the six critical questions

Ask the team to discuss and come to resolution around the questions below (which may vary somewhat depending on the nature of the team and its place in the organization). Before moving on, make certain that each team member has the same understanding of what has been agreed to. Questions include:

- Why do we exist?
- How do we behave?
- What do we do?
- How will we succeed?
- What is most important -- right now?
- Who must do what?

### 2. Reinforce Role Clarity

Ensure every leader knows what they are uniquely responsible for. Clarify the difference between support and ownership. Create accountability by asking: "Who owns this—and how will we know it's working?"





# 3. The Over-Communication Gap



When employees at all levels are unclear about what the organization stands for, where the organization is heading and the roles they play, these common symptoms or results tend to show up:

- Leaders say different things in different rooms.
- Frontline employees receive mixed signals from various managers.
- Teams interpret vision, priorities, or strategy in their own way.
- Projects overlap, compete, or contradict each other.
- There's no shared understanding of what success looks like.
- Employees ask, "Where are we going?" or "Why are we doing this?"
- Lack of clarity erodes confidence and slows decision-making.
- Misalignment creates friction, skepticism, and internal politics.
- Leaders assume people "get it" when they don't.
- People aren't held to the same standards because expectations aren't clearly reinforced.
- Initiatives stall because teams aren't aligned or energized.

If you scored low in **Over-Communication**, here's what you can do about it immediately.



## Tips for Over-Communicating Clarity

There are a few simple tools that serve to Over-communicate an organization's sense of clarity:



### 1. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Repetition is one of the most powerful and underutilized characteristics of good communication from a leadership team. However, too many leaders shy away from it because they get bored saying the same messages again and again, and because they want to avoid criticism for appearing redundant and potentially condescending. Ironically, most leaders complain that employees do not remember or act upon the messages they deliver, and yet they are reluctant to repeat that message.

### 2. Keep it simple:

Another key to effective communication is the ability to avoid overcomplicating key messages. Years of education and training make most leaders feel compelled to use all of their intellectual capabilities when speaking or writing. While this is certainly understandable, it only serves to confuse employees. What employees need from leaders is clear, uncomplicated messages about where the organization is headed and how they can contribute to getting there.

### 3. Cascade Key Messages

At the conclusion of leadership team meetings, ask team members to agree on a common set of messages that they will communicate to their respective staffs within a set period of time, usually between 24 and 48 hours after the end of the meeting. Then, ask members of their staffs to communicate those same messages to their staffs, and so on until they have cascaded throughout much or all of the organization.





## 4. The Reinforcement of Clarity Gap



You've clarified the direction. You've got the right people in the room. But execution still lags behind. Why? Failure to **reinforce your clarity** can show up like this:

- Hiring, performance reviews, compensation, and promotions don't align with stated values or strategic goals.
- Core values hang on the wall—but not in how people are hired, fired, or evaluated.
- Leadership meetings drift from priorities and behaviors established in Disciplines 2 and 3.
- Weekly or staff meetings don't reinforce the thematic goal or key objectives.
- Core values are referenced less and less—until they're forgotten.
- Leaders start tolerating misaligned behavior because there's no consistent reinforcement loop.
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If **Reinforcing Clarity** is your lowest score, the following tips will help you execute across the organization.



## Tips for Reinforcing Clarity



### 1. Hiring:

Look beyond experience in job candidates to ensure a fit with the organization's values and culture. Ask consistent, behavioral questions of interviewees and probe for evidence that they will thrive in the organization over time. Debrief collectively with all involved in the hiring process to determine if any additional interviewing needs to occur.

### 2. Managing performance:

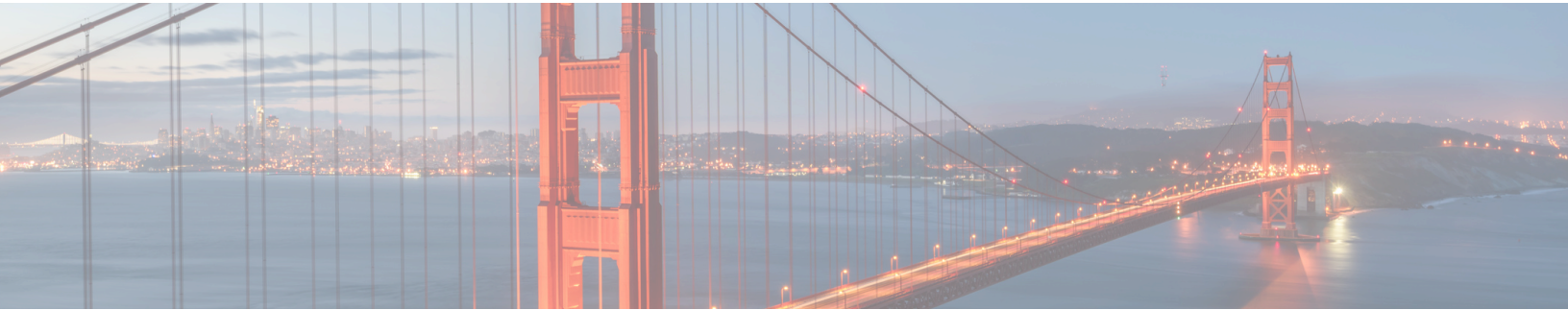
An employee's performance needs to be measure beyond just the "feeling" of their direct manager. When evaluating performance, use a systematic, non-bureaucratic method that reviews not only progress against goals, but behavioral attributes as well. Avoid the temptation to employ a generic, off-the-shelf program. Spend time developing a model that is specific and customized to reinforce the organization's clarity.

### 3. Meetings:

At first glance, meetings may not seem like a human system. In reality, meetings are one of the most important human systems that exist within an organization. Without effective meetings, an organization will waste time, make poor decisions and leave employees frustrated and resolved to work in silos. Put in place a meeting structure that delineates between tactical and strategic issues so employees can properly focus. Avoid the desires to fit everything into one big meeting.

### 4. Rewarding:

Rewards and recognition should be simple and tied to organization clarity. Reward employees for behaving according to your organization's core values. Hold up those stellar employees as examples that others should strive to emulate. Be cautious of rewarding only based on financial metrics, as this may send an inconsistent message regarding the expected behaviors.



# YOUR NEXT MOVE...

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