



# What's in a System?

How workforce management can help you achieve long-term strategic alignment



Jaylon Sherrell and Joel A. Beyioku

# Introduction

When it comes to strategic planning — and the implementation of that strategy — too many organizations are facing a disconnect. One out of two leaders acknowledge that strategy implementation is just as important as strategic planning, yet there is a 67% chance that their organizations are failing to successfully implement planned strategies.<sup>1</sup> Challenges like poor communication, lack of leadership, and using the wrong measures to accurately assess progress are common, but one challenge leaders may not be considering is the need for strategic organizational alignment.

## Defining strategic organizational alignment

Strategic organizational alignment occurs when all the major components of an organization — including people, marketing, operations, and systems — are interconnected and directly linked to the mission, vision, and values of an organization. You need to be able to answer these questions: What do we currently do? and What do we want to do? By aligning your organization's decisions and actions so that they support the achievement of your strategic goals, you'll be positioned to reach strategic organizational alignment.

*How aligned is your organization? Consider the following questions, ideally with your team. You might ask them about the enterprise overall, or about a single strategically important business line, activity, or function, such as the implementation of a workforce management system.*



Source: Jonathan Trevor and Barry Varcoe, *Harvard Business Review*

When we examine organizational alignment, management information systems such as workforce management and human capital management systems are good examples to explore. A company can have a detailed purpose, strategy, value proposition, and source of differentiation, as well as skilled resources for achieving profit, but those employees may also be forced to spend countless hours manually calculating timesheets, creating schedules, and ensuring proper staffing at peak and nonpeak times.

This increase in overhead spending can threaten not only the company's breakeven financials, but also the capabilities of its available resources, due to inherent opportunity costs. In this example, the argument can be made that implementing a workforce management solution not only is an avenue for achieving short-term goals but should also be viewed as a long-term strategic tool that can help organizations achieve overall strategic organizational alignment.

Or take the example of an organization that touts itself as being "employee-focused," but its internal processes are difficult to use and lack the consumer-style application features that users have become accustomed to. Getting answers on benefits, available time off, and changing contact information is cumbersome and often results in errors. As a result, the company experiences low levels of employee engagement and high turnover rates. More efficient workforce management solutions could mitigate these challenges and help the organization meet both its short-term and long-term goals.

Let's look at some of the best practices that companies can use to reach overall workforce management goals and achieve organizational alignment efforts.

## Take a fresh look at organizational practices

### Identify your mission

Before you can achieve long-term strategic alignment, it's important to identify what your organization is trying to achieve. What are your organization's vision, values, and purpose? When the mission of the organization is developed, is everyone made aware of it? These are the questions that must be answered by executives before any changes can be made. The long-term strategic goal must be identified and communicated to everyone in the organization or any changes will cause confusion and frustration among employees.

*If you're looking to grow, you have to have software that can grow with you, and UKG is a tool that has helped us expand our business.*

**Hoa Luong, Chief Operating Officer**  
Boba Tea Company

## Assess the organization

Once your organization's mission and long-term goals are identified, the next step to achieving long-term strategic alignment is assessing whether the current processes are aligned with your long-term goals. Ask questions such as these: Why do we do it this way? How are we monitoring this process? What are our current pain points? Can we make this process better? You may find that answers range from "I don't know" to "We've always done it this way." The key is to identify processes that don't align with the mission and values of the organization so they can be adjusted.

### Case Study: Kum & Go Convenience Stores

Kum & Go was using a one-size-fits-all approach to workforce management that left busier stores short on hours needed to meet the company's long-term strategic goal of delivering superior customer service, especially at busier times. To fix the problem, Kum & Go implemented UKG Workforce Scheduler™, allowing the company to better align associate scheduling with customer traffic, improve scheduling efficiencies, better manage labor costs, and increase employee engagement. With best-fit schedules in place, Kum & Go was able to align staffing with demand, automatically generate demand- and volume-based schedules using transactional data, and assign the right person to each position based on predefined criteria.

## Getting others on board with changing processes

With your organization's mission developed and communicated and the process gaps in creating long-term strategic alignment identified, now it's time to create the process changes. This can be achieved by following the foundational building blocks of organizational change management.

**Communication.** Communication is critically important throughout the entire process of long-term strategic alignment. All impacted groups must be aware of the mission of the organization, the processes that are being changed to create long-term strategic alignment, as well as the purpose of the process changes. Information and details should be shared repeatedly through commonly used, accessible communication vehicles. Examples include in-person meetings, remote/town hall meetings, corporatewide emails, company websites, newsletters, blogs, and posters.

### Case Study: Boba Tea Company

As Boba Tea Company experienced extensive growth, the strain of operating with multiple disparate workforce systems resulted in problems with inadequate staffing, poor visibility into business data, inconsistent communication, and missed sales. After implementing a UKG™ timekeeping, scheduling, and HR solution, Boba Tea Company achieved its short-term goals of increasing sales by 23% and reducing labor costs. In addition, the company was able to achieve long-term goals associated with organizational alignment, including aligning scheduling with forecasted traffic and transactions, creating a unified platform for consistent communication across the organization, and becoming an employer of choice.

And be sure to reinforce the message that information related to organizational change management is coming directly from leadership and is going to affect the entire organization. If employees do not feel that the information is relevant to them, it might be dismissed and ignored.

**Ability.** Once employees are aware of the changes and understand their purpose, it's important to ensure they receive proper training to begin using the new strategically aligned processes. To accomplish this, you need to have sufficient resources dedicated to rollout and training and be prepared to respond quickly to any roadblocks that may emerge.

### Case Study: Forest City Enterprises

Manual workforce processes were hurting the ability of Forest City Enterprises to manage labor-to-budget constraints and inflating the time required for payroll processing. With UKG timekeeping and mobile solutions, and UKG timeclocks, the company was able to save \$500,000 in more accurate time capture and achieve a 25-30% reduction in overtime costs. Forest City Enterprises' focus on management systems allowed it to achieve organizational strategic alignment by increasing productivity, compliance, and accurate cost control across its value chain.

**Reinforcement.** Reinforcement is the most overlooked component to creating long-term strategic alignment. Often, leaders spend most of their time focused on the front end of the process of creating the strategic alignment but fail to maintain the effort over the long term. This leads to short-term alignment that dissipates as competing priorities distract the organization from its long-term mission.

Executives need to maintain active visibility in the process of creating long-term strategic alignment. To drive sustainability, executives must provide feedback channels that foster continuous improvement, identify leaders to monitor and report on the progress of alignment, and maintain robust communication of the mission. These efforts will demonstrate the involvement of leadership in driving strategic alignment for the organization and help sustain the long-term change.

## Closing

How close is your organization to achieving strategic organizational alignment? Are the core values of your business understood at every level of the organization, reflected in the day-to-day operations of individual employees, and aligned to support the organization's overall purpose? When well planned, implemented, and maintained wisely, UKG workforce management and human capital management solutions are powerful tools that enable organizations to achieve organizational alignment. Once organizations fully understand and assess the changes that are needed and reinforce the associated behavior, UKG not only can assist with transactional day-to-day activities, but may also truly transform an organization's long-term strategy and outcomes.

## Authors



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## About UKG

At UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group), our purpose is people™. Built from a merger that created one of the largest cloud companies in the world, UKG believes organizations succeed when they focus on their people. As a leading global provider of HCM, payroll, HR service delivery, and workforce management solutions, UKG delivers award-winning Pro, Dimensions, and Ready solutions to help tens of thousands of organizations across geographies and in every industry drive better business outcomes, improve HR effectiveness, streamline the payroll process, and help make work a better, more connected experience for everyone. UKG has more than 12,000 employees around the globe and is known for an inclusive workplace culture. The company has earned numerous awards for culture, products, and services, including consecutive years on Fortune's *100 Best Companies to Work For* list. To learn more, visit [ukg.com](http://ukg.com).

### References:

1. Bridges Business Consultancy, *Strategy Implementation, 2016 Survey Results*, at 3, found at <http://implementation-hub.com/resources/implementation-surveys>.



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