**The Congruence Model**

**Aligning the Drivers of High Performance**



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**Performance comprises four interrelated elements.**

Is your organization's performance as good as it could be? What could be changed to improve things and why would this help? Does the key lie in the work itself? Or with the people doing it? Should you reorganize the corporate structure? Or try to change the prevailing culture?

And why does one organization seem to thrive on a certain corporate structure or type of work, while another struggles to make a profit?

The answer lies in understanding the key causes or drivers of performance and the relationship between them. The Congruence Model, first developed by David A Nadler and M L Tushman in the early 1980s, provides a way of doing just this.

It's a powerful tool for finding out what's going wrong with a team or organization, and for thinking about how you can fix it.

**Understanding the Tool**

The Congruence Model is based on the principle that an organization's performance is derived from four elements: tasks, people, structure, and culture. The higher the congruence, or compatibility, amongst these elements, the greater the performance. For example, if you have brilliant people working for you, but your organization's culture is not a good fit for the way they work, their brilliance will not shine through. Likewise, you can have the latest technology and superbly streamlined processes to support decision making, but if the organizational culture is highly bureaucratic, decisions will undoubtedly still get caught in the quagmire.

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To avoid this type of incongruence, the Congruence Model offers a systematic way to consider the root elements that drive organizational performance. The following diagram shows how the four critical elements relate to strategy and performance:



**Tip:**

This Congruence Model can be used to consider other drivers of performance and effectiveness too. Follow the same steps below, looking for congruence and incongruence between the key drivers you have identified as important to the part of the business you are examining.

For example, if you wanted to look at your marketing performance you might use this model to analyze the [**marketing 4 Ps**](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newSTR_94.htm) (Product, Price, Promotion and Place) for congruence and incongruence.

**How to Use the Tool**

To apply the Congruence Model start by looking at each component individually and then compare and analyze how they relate to one another.

**Step One: Analyze each key element separately**

**Tasks:** First you need to understand what work is at the core of your organization's performance. Here you are looking at the critical tasks that are done within the organization from two perspectives: What work is done, and how is it processed.

* Does the work require specific knowledge or skill?
* What are the intrinsic rewards involved in completing the work?
* Is it mechanistic or creative?
* How does the work flow?
* What sort of approach is needed to do this work best? Quick? Thorough? Caring? Analytical? Precise? Enthusiatic? ...
* Where are the interdependencies?

**People:** You know what work is done; now you have to look at who does it. You need to know what types of people are currently performing the organization's critical tasks.

* Who interacts to get the work done? Bosses, employees, peers, external stakeholders.
* What skills do the people possess? Knowledge, experience, education, competencies.
* Is there a demographic profile? Age, gender, ethnicity.
* What are these people's preferences and expectations for compensation, reward, career progression, recognition, and organizational commitment?

**Organizational Structure:** This element involves looking at the formal structure, systems and processes that support the organization.

* How is the company organized? Mechanistic or organic.
* Are there distinct business units or other separations? Regional, functional, by product, by market.
* How distinct and/or rigid are the lines of authority?
* How standardized is the work? Rules, policies, procedures.
* How is work measured and incentivized and rewarded?

**Culture:** Here you are concerned with the unwritten rules that define how work is really done – which depends on attitudes, beliefs, commitment, motivation and so on, as well as the formal elements of process and structure that you have already examined. This element is the hardest to define, and often the one with the most influence.

* What do people really do to get work done?
* How does information flow around the organization?
* What are the beliefs and values of individuals in the organization?
* What [**leadership style**](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_84.htm) is adopted?
* Is there a political network in play?

**Tip:**

The Tasks, People, Organization Structure and Culture headings are just one way of looking at this.

Another popular approach is to use the [**McKinsey 7S framework**](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newSTR_91.htm) . These are: Strategy, Structure, Systems, Style/Culture, Staff, Skills and Shared Values. Other frameworks, such as the [**Burke-Litwin Change Model**](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_90.htm) , may be appropriate in other situations.

**Step Two: Analyze how these elements interrelate in your organization**

Once you have identified the major factors in performance for each of the four key elements, you need to look at how they interrelate. You are looking for areas of congruence and incongruence.

* **Work and People**: Is the work being done by the right people?
* **Work and Structure**: Is the work done in a well-coordinated manner given the organizational structure in place?
* **Structure and People**: Does the formal organization structure allow the people to work together effectively?
* **People and Culture**: Are the people working within a culture that best suits them?
* **Culture and Work**: Does the culture support the nature of the work that needs to be done?
* **Structure and Culture**: Do the formal and informal structures work cooperatively or do they compete?

**Step Three: Plan to Create and Maintain Congruence**

Work through the areas of congruence and incongruence you have identified, and decide what needs to be done to resolve major incongruence and to reinforce congruence. As you move forward with your plan, strategy, or decision, it's important to remember that you keep on looking for the things that are well-coordinated, as well as the things that aren't. It's just as important to reinforce what is currently congruent, as well as change what's incongruent, and build in processes to ensure that the current congruence is maintained.

**Key Points**

Organizations are effective when the four key components of performance – tasks, people, structure, and culture – fit together. When these elements work in unison to support and promote high performance, the end result is an organization-wide system that functions efficiently and effectively.

When pieces are out of synch with each other, the friction that is caused has a negative impact on the entire process, which limits the overall productivity that can be achieved.

This makes Congruence Analysis a useful tool for fixing problems in your team or organization. Use it to take a look at the organizational components contributing to your overall performance, and create congruence in and between them – people will be much more satisfied and the work will be done that much more effectively.

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