

# Whitepaper

## Meaning Alignment

### Meaning Alingment

Basics of business administration for the unleashing of self-control

*„Meaning alignment is that magical moment when a person forms an emotional, subconscious, and or conscious bond with something or someone else (another individual, a company, a concept, community, brand, and so on) that transforms their thinking and actions from that point onwards.“*

Gebhard Borck

*The will to meaning determines our life! Those who want to motivate people and demand performance must offer possibilities for meaning.*

Viktor Frankl (1905 – 1997)

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# Meaning Alignment – Definition

## Background Information

I first coined the term „meaning alignment“ in 2003 to help identify and describe a unique state of connection between an individual and their organization, a connection that is neither solely materialistic nor purely emotional or practical.

My goal isn't to completely capture the multi-layered and complex subject of individual meaning or fulfillment. Instead, I focus on the specific, tangible moment of an individual finding purpose within their professional life, in the context of business administration.

By making these moments of meaning alignment visible, we gain new insights into collaboration and productivity within organizations.

Over time, the concept of meaning alignment has evolved beyond the realm of business administration. It proves useful for any group seeking to understand how its members are bound together.

## Delimitation: Meaning / Fulfillment

Both meaning and fulfillment are highly personal. They involve a complex interaction between the conscious and subconscious mind, emotions and facts, innate behaviors and learned ones, and the internal and external world. Given this complexity, it's virtually impossible for someone to fully comprehend their own sense of meaning and fulfillment, let alone explain it to others. Therefore, dealing with the concept of meaning can be as unpredictable as it is perplexing and surprising. Meaning alignment bypasses the need to understand these motives, leaving it up to the individual's responsibility.

Meaning alignment simply observes the state (coupling, uncoupling, decoupling). It's about how we perceive our energy connection with others and ourselves.

Recognizing this moment calls for us to address it. Meaning alignment focuses on the effects, rather than the motives. Whether they occur or not provides valuable insights for both the group and the individual.

The sense of meaning remains with the individual. Meaning alignment focuses on the moment and method of connection, and the resultant actions.

## Differentiation: Identification

In the context of meaning alignment, people can be seen as extremists. The question: „Who are you?“ is often answered in terms of distinction: „If you really want to know, I am not just German or European, I am a Swabian.“

Identity doesn't have to be binary. It allows me to align most of my life's decisions (consumer behavior, relationships, etc.) with the values and principles of the group/philosophy I am connected to.

## Differentiation: Affective/ motivational states

It's widely accepted that factors like job control, task diversity, social support at work, feedback, and an overall positive organizational climate can improve work engagement. These resources can stimulate motivation, but this state is temporary and unstable.

Meaning alignment, on the other hand, is a cognitively based response. It involves a person assessing their entire work situation in terms of how it aligns with their personality, life meanings, values, and goals. In this sense, motivational resources are part of this evaluation, but they are not the only or the most important factors.

So, when someone experiences meaning alignment, factors such as job control and feedback can positively influence their well-being at work. However, these are not necessary for them to feel motivated. The primary source of motivation comes from meaning alignment - a cognitive assessment and decision.

Though meaning alignment can also be time-limited, it is generally more stable, resilient, and reliable than affect-driven states.

# Connection States

## The Power of Meaning

Everyone constantly goes through an examination of meaning. This happens consciously sometimes, but most often it happens unconsciously. It's a never-ending process where we constantly evaluate our experiences, assessing if they make sense to us and align with our existence. This process is always ongoing, even when we sleep or meditate, leading us to gain insights that can feel profound.

This examination is fueled by our inner longing to find purpose in life. Sometimes, this process can lead to dramatic shifts. For instance, a relationship that used to be very important to us might suddenly lose all its meaning. Or the opposite can happen, something insignificant can become very meaningful in a heartbeat. This is where Meaning Alignment steps in.

## Meaning Alignment (coupling)

This happens when you suddenly find common purpose with someone or something. This moment of connection can bring about changes in your habits and motivations. A moment of Meaning Alignment can be fleeting or long-lasting. Sometimes, it can energize you for a lifetime, or at times, just for a few minutes. But as long as this connection withstands your ongoing examination of meaning, it will motivate you deeply, allowing you to withstand setbacks and celebrate successes with great enthusiasm. Meaning Alignment brings you closer to personal fulfillment and satisfaction.

## Uncoupling

This is a state of neutrality. You might hear something or meet someone and remain indifferent. You neither support nor oppose it. You can identify or disagree with ideas and people without feeling the need to change your actions or attitudes. Uncoupling allows you to remain open-minded and tolerant.

## Meaning Decoupling

This happens when you strongly disagree with a situation or person and you feel compelled to act against it. This could mean ending a relationship, quitting a job, or leaving a place. You are so against it that you are willing to exert energy to oppose it.

## Dealing with Connection States

Being mindful of these connection states in ourselves and others is key to applying Meaning Alignment effectively. By recognizing the moments of coupling, decoupling and uncoupling, you can harness your energy and direct it towards groups with which you share common purpose. This can create a powerful collective force where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

## Meaning in the Economy

According to the GALLUP Engagement Index 2012, 61 percent of employees in Germany „work to rule“, meaning they aren't connected to their work. Only 15 percent find joy in their work, indicating Meaning Alignment. Surprisingly, 24 percent are so dissatisfied that they actively work against their employer. This dissatisfaction costs the German economy billions annually.

However, companies can boost productivity by increasing employee engagement and fostering Meaning Alignment. Current leadership models that account for this trend are focusing more on collaboration, self-determination, and co-decision. This contrasts with traditional hierarchical models of organization.

In today's cooperative, empathetic economy, we need to rethink what ties employees to companies. Financial incentives are not the sole answer, as they are subject to habituation and may lose their motivating effect over time. Meaning Alignment, on the other hand, based on individual motives and values, can result in more sustainable employee engagement, even in times of crisis.

As good employees become scarce due to demographic shifts, companies that observe and utilize the mechanism of Meaning Alignment will have a competitive edge. They will foster a work culture that not only attracts talent but also encourages their best performance.