

Leadership Architecture Alignment Check

Six questions to assess whether your leadership architecture is aligned to build and reinforce the capability your future business requires.

Based on [RBL's Leadership Brand Architecture](#)

ALIGN BUSINESS STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS, TALENT AND ORGANIZATION SYSTEMS, EVIDENCE, AND STAKEHOLDER REPUTATION AROUND SHARED LOGIC

Organizations do not build leadership capability through a model or development program alone. They build it through the combined signals embedded in what leaders are expected to do, how leadership is assessed and developed, where talent investments are concentrated, how performance and succession decisions are made, and what stakeholders ultimately experience.

RBL's Leadership Brand Architecture starts outside-in: with where the business is going, the stakeholders it must serve, and the value leaders must help create. It connects that business case to leadership expectations and to the talent and organizational systems that build, reinforce, measure, and sustain those expectations.

Alignment matters because leadership systems do more than communicate priorities - they determine which leadership capabilities are selected for, developed, rewarded, advanced, and ultimately institutionalized across the organization.

WHY REVISIT ALIGNMENT NOW?

Alignment is not static. Even a well-designed leadership architecture can drift out of alignment as the business changes.

Four forces commonly pull a once-coherent leadership architecture out of alignment:

THE ARCHITECTURE



FORCES THAT CAN CREATE DRIFT

STRATEGY SHIFTS

The business, stakeholder expectations, or operating model moves while leadership priorities still reflect an earlier strategy.

WORK CHANGES

AI, automation, cross-functional work, and new decision demands change what leaders need to contribute.

LEADERSHIP DEMANDS DIFFER

Level, role complexity, judgment, accountability, and strategic value create different leadership demands.

SYSTEMS DRIFT

Assessment, development, performance, succession, rewards, and measurement begin reinforcing different definitions of success.

These shifts do not make enduring leadership fundamentals obsolete. They increase the need to revisit emphasis, differentiation, and application - and to ensure the architecture is still building the leadership capability the future business requires.

SIX QUESTIONS

Where does your leadership architecture lose alignment?

Use one question for each element to test whether the six elements still reinforce the same future-facing business logic. The most revealing signals are often where the answer is unclear, where senior leaders hold different views, or where confidence rests more on assumption than evidence. The third column highlights observable signs that the systems may be drifting apart.

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LEADERSHIP BRAND ARCHITECTURE ELEMENT	ALIGNMENT QUESTION	SIGNS OF MISALIGNMENT
1. Build the business case	<i>Have we refreshed the business case for leadership around where the business is going, the stakeholders it must serve, and the value it needs to create?</i>	Leadership priorities still reflect an earlier strategy or operating model; leaders cannot clearly connect leadership expectations to the business outcomes they are meant to enable.
2. Agree on what leaders must do	<i>Does our leadership model translate that business case into the durable fundamentals, level-specific expectations, and distinctive leadership behaviors the future business will require?</i>	Different businesses, regions, or talent processes reinforce different definitions of effective leadership; expectations are too generic to distinguish what leadership requires by level or context.
3. Assess leaders and leadership	<i>Do our assessment and talent processes tell us whether we have the leadership strengths, gaps, potential, and readiness the future business will require?</i>	Assessment yields useful individual feedback but little enterprise insight; talent reviews cannot clearly show where future leadership capability or readiness is strongest, weakest, or most exposed.
4. Invest in leaders and leadership	<i>Are development and talent investments focused where leadership capability matters most?</i>	Investment is spread broadly or historically rather than differentiated by strategic value, role complexity, capability gaps, or where stronger leadership would create disproportionate value.
5. Measure leaders and leadership	<i>Can we show whether the leadership behaviors and investments we emphasize contribute to outcomes that matter?</i>	Measures emphasize participation or program activity; the organization has limited evidence connecting leadership behavior and investment to customer, employee, operational, or business outcomes.
6. Ensure reputation	<i>Do stakeholders experience - and have confidence in - the leadership capability and reputation we intend to build?</i>	The intended Leadership Brand is clearer internally than in stakeholder experience; key stakeholders do not consistently experience the leadership qualities the organization intends to differentiate.

WHY THESE GAPS MATTER

Misalignment is not simply an HR-process issue; it is a capability risk. When leadership expectations, assessment, development, succession, performance, and investment systems reinforce different priorities, talent decisions fragment, scarce investment is diluted, and bench strength can develop in the wrong places. The result can be substantial leadership investment without confidence that the organization is building the leadership capability its future strategy requires.

Explore where alignment matters most

If the Alignment Check surfaces uncertainty, conflicting assumptions, or areas where the system is no longer reinforcing the same business priorities, that is often where the most useful conversation begins. In a 20-minute Leadership Architecture Alignment Discussion, we can examine where misalignment may have the greatest business consequence and whether further validation or deeper work would be useful.

20-MINUTE DISCUSSION

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Related RBL thinking: [Dave Ulrich and Norm Smallwood, The Foundations of Effective Leadership](#)