

The Clarity Playbook

How companies actually create alignment
and unlock real growth



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Introduction: The Clarity Dilemma

When I look back over my career, there is one moment that shows up in different forms inside almost every company I have ever worked with. It usually happens in a conference room or an offsite, often right after everyone finishes talking about how important alignment is and how committed they are to getting on the same page.

Someone asks a simple question.

“What problem do we solve better than anyone else?”

Every time, the room gets quiet. Not because people do not know the answer, but because everyone **thinks** they know the answer, and everyone’s answer is a little different.

I remember one moment in particular. A financial institution was having a rough year. Growth had slowed, competitors were gaining ground, and regulators were making life miserable. The leadership team had been grinding for months. Smart people. Good intentions. Long hours. Yet we were still stuck.

When I asked that question, the CMO gave an answer that sounded solid but leaned too heavily on brand language. The head of sales approached it from a completely different angle and framed it around relationships. The COO talked about operational excellence. The CEO talked about our mission and purpose. Four people. Four different truths. All valid. None were fully aligned.

That was the moment I finally said out loud what I had been thinking for years.

“The real reason we’re not moving isn’t because we lack ideas or talent. It’s because we don’t agree on what we’re actually trying to do.”

This is the part most companies do not want to admit.

Most organizations are not failing because of weak marketing or poor execution.

Most are not struggling because teams aren’t trying or because the product isn’t good enough.

Most companies stall because the people inside the building are not operating from a shared understanding of the company’s identity, purpose, and value.

What I learned that day, and many days after, is that clarity is foundational.

And when clarity is weak, everything else becomes harder than it needs to be.

This playbook is my attempt to put language and structure to something I have watched up close for over two decades: the slow erosion of clarity inside organizations, and the work it takes to rebuild it in a way that actually sticks.

How Companies Drift Without Realizing It

If I'm honest, most companies don't lose clarity because someone makes a catastrophic decision or declares a new strategy without thinking it through. They lose it quietly, in the small moments where priorities shift, new ideas pile on top of old ones, and nobody wants to be the person who asks why we are doing any of this, or if the ideas are actually good ones that align to the direction of the org. Or worse, will it have a meaningful impact.

I have watched teams unintentionally drift into confusion because everyone was trying to be helpful. Nobody wants to be the one who slows things down or challenges the CEO's latest idea. Nobody wants to call out that a new initiative contradicts something we all agreed on a month earlier. Nobody wants to admit when the message does not make sense anymore.

Drift does not feel like drift when you are in it. It feels like progress. You are busy. You're tackling new things. You're adding features. You're serving more segments. You're launching new campaigns. But underneath the activity, the company's original intent starts to fade. And no one notices until you wake up and realize you are solving a hundred problems that do not ladder up to anything coherent.

This is how clarity disappears.
Not through crisis. Through slow accumulation.

The Alignment Illusion

One of the most frustrating parts of my career has been sitting in rooms where everyone *thinks* they are aligned. They walk in with confidence, optimism, and the belief that months of meetings and endless PowerPoints must have led to shared understanding.

Then someone asks a basic strategic question, and the illusion collapses instantly.

I have seen this more times than I can count. Teams talk a lot, but they rarely stop to confirm that they are talking about the same thing. They use the same words but with different meanings. They nod in agreement because they assume everyone shares the same mental model, even when that is not remotely true.

It creates a strange kind of organizational theater. People speak in the language of alignment, but nothing in their decisions or priorities reflects it. People smile and nod in meetings because that is easier than having the uncomfortable conversation about what is actually unclear. They just want to get along with each other and have everyone feel good.

This is how companies get stuck.
They think they are aligned.
They aren't.
And nobody wants to break the illusion.

The Moment Activity Replaces Strategy

When clarity fades, a certain type of momentum takes over. I call it "*The Activity Trap*." I have watched teams work harder than ever while achieving less than ever. More campaigns. More tools. More dashboards. More content. More everything.

Everyone is doing their best. Everyone is chasing something. But because there is no shared intent, none of it adds up. They feel productive, but the business is not moving. The metrics shift, but the outcomes do not.

Early on in my career, I was part of teams where we produced beautiful work that ultimately meant nothing, because it was aimed at the wrong target. Not because people lacked talent, but because nobody had stepped back to ask the most important question: what are we actually trying to accomplish here.

Activity is not the problem.
Activity is good when it serves a purpose.
The problem is when activity becomes the substitute for clarity.

Why Companies Lose Sight of Value

One of the things I have learned the hard way is that companies often forget the real reason customers choose them. When internal conversations start shifting toward features, technology, or process, it is usually a sign that value has become blurry.

I have spent years helping teams move away from describing what their product does to explaining what it actually *changes* for the customer and how it can make their lives better. There is a big difference.

Customers don't buy software. They buy time they get back.
Customers don't buy financial products. They buy peace of mind.
Customers don't buy automation. They buy reduced pressure and fewer mistakes.

Whenever we drift away from that, clarity disappears.
Value has to be understood emotionally as well as functionally.
If a team cannot explain the transformation it creates, the customer never will.

The Five Questions That Build Clarity

After watching this happen in organizations of every shape and size, as I grew into leadership, I started asking the same five questions in every engagement and where and when it made sense. If a leadership team can answer these honestly and consistently, clarity begins to take shape.

The questions are simple, but they are hard to answer well.

1. What are we trying to achieve?
2. Who do we exist for?
3. What changes for the better in their world because of us?
4. What do we do better than our competitors?
5. How do we show up (or GTM) in a way that reflects all of this?

Every time I ask these questions, I learn more than any dashboard could ever show me. I also see where the cracks are. Sometimes the cracks are big. Sometimes they are small. But they are always there. That helps me understand where we are, and build relationships to influence change.

Clarity starts with the courage to answer these questions honestly.

Clarity Is Not an Exercise. It Is an Operating System.

One of the biggest mistakes companies make is treating clarity like a workshop or a deck. Clarity cannot live on a wall or in a slogan. It has to live in daily decisions.

When clarity is strong, it starts to show up in the rhythm of the company when it comes to the following:

- how leaders talk about the business
- how teams set priorities
- how decisions get made
- how people handle disagreement
- how the company shows up to customers
- how teams interpret what matters and what does not

I have worked in environments where clarity was strong. Everything felt lighter. Faster. More focused. People worked with confidence because they understood what they were building and why it mattered. I've helped build that through vision, leadership and engagements communications.

And I have worked in environments where clarity was weak. Everything took twice as long. Everyone had an opinion. Every decision required negotiation. The team seemed exhausted even when the workload wasn't that heavy.

Clarity is not about saying less.
It is about knowing what matters most.

Clarity Lives or Dies in Human Behavior

Here is the part that is hardest to talk about, but the most important to understand.

The biggest barriers to clarity are not strategic.
They are human.

I have watched clarity fall apart because people wanted to be polite and avoid difficult conversations. Because they wanted to protect their teams or preserve relationships. Because they were afraid of being wrong or stepping into someone else's territory. Because they were juggling unspoken incentives and pressures they were not comfortable saying out loud.

Companies are made of people. People have egos, fears, histories, loyalties, and personal agendas. Not because they are bad people, but because they are human.

When leaders put their own preferences above the company's purpose, clarity erodes.
When teams avoid truth to maintain harmony, clarity disappears.
When politics overwhelm honesty, alignment collapses.

The companies that get this right are the ones where leaders prioritize the mission above themselves. That does not mean being blunt for the sake of being blunt. It means being courageous enough to express what they think is true, and why they think it's true, even when it is uncomfortable.

Clarity is a leadership behavior long before it is a marketing strategy.

The Real Work of Rebuilding Clarity

Every time I have helped a team rebuild clarity, the turning point has always been the same. Someone finally says what everyone has been thinking but no one has been willing to say.

“We are not on the same page.”

Once that truth is spoken out loud, the work can begin.

Rebuilding clarity is not about inventing a new story.
It is about rediscovering the truth of the company and committing to it together.

When a team does that work, everything changes:

- decisions get faster
- priorities become obvious
- meetings become productive
- messaging sharpens
- customers respond
- teams feel more energized
- growth becomes easier

This doesn't happen because the company suddenly became smarter, but because it became united.

Clarity is not magic.
It is alignment in its purest form.

Final Thoughts: Clarity Is the Competitive Advantage Most Companies Ignore

If I had to boil my experience in this area down to one lesson, it would be this.
Clarity is the most valuable leadership tool a company can have, and also the most neglected.

Everyone talks about strategy.
Everyone talks about execution.
Everyone talks about talent and tools and technology.
But very few people talk honestly about clarity.

Clarity is what makes everything else work.
It is the difference between momentum and motion, between alignment and chaos, between a

team that moves with confidence and a team that feels like it is constantly fighting its own shadow.

Companies that protect and invest in clarity win more often and with less friction. Companies that lose clarity tend to drift until they realize they are miles away from where they intended to be.

If you want your organization to move faster, to grow stronger, and to operate with more conviction, start here.

Start with clarity.
Everything you want to build depends on it.