



Collaborative Alignment Model

An integrated approach to understanding the dynamics, establishing the language and developing the behavioural competencies to achieve collaborative alignment in high performance teams.

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Background

Emergent Insights Collaborative Alignment Model represents a unique approach to designing, establishing and managing group collaboration through communication.

The model has been developed through a synthesis of several theories and hard won practical experience. The theories are drawn from the fields of Integral studies, Emotional Intelligence, Values Intelligence, Communications, and Futures studies.

The model has been developed in response to a growing need for higher level team functioning. This 'higher level' is often characterised by inter-/ or trans-disciplinary teams, involving members from different organisations, or different functional groups within an organisation, and requiring creative solutions to simultaneously satisfy a variety of stakeholder objectives and operational constraints.

Emergent Insights approach to addressing these increasingly complex requirements is based on identifying the structural elements required to achieve the team alignment necessary for higher level team functioning. This approach allows for the flexible application of the model to a range of situations, while retaining accessibility to its logic.

The Model

The logic of the model is based on three deep structural elements of collaborative alignment identified from a developmental perspective. These include five levels of alignment, and the various factors and actors that need to be integrated at each of these levels. For each level, a range of competencies on behalf of actors, and enabling conditions in terms of factors, for actor communication, have been identified as crucial to achieving collaborative alignment.

With these core ingredients, the model can be used to:

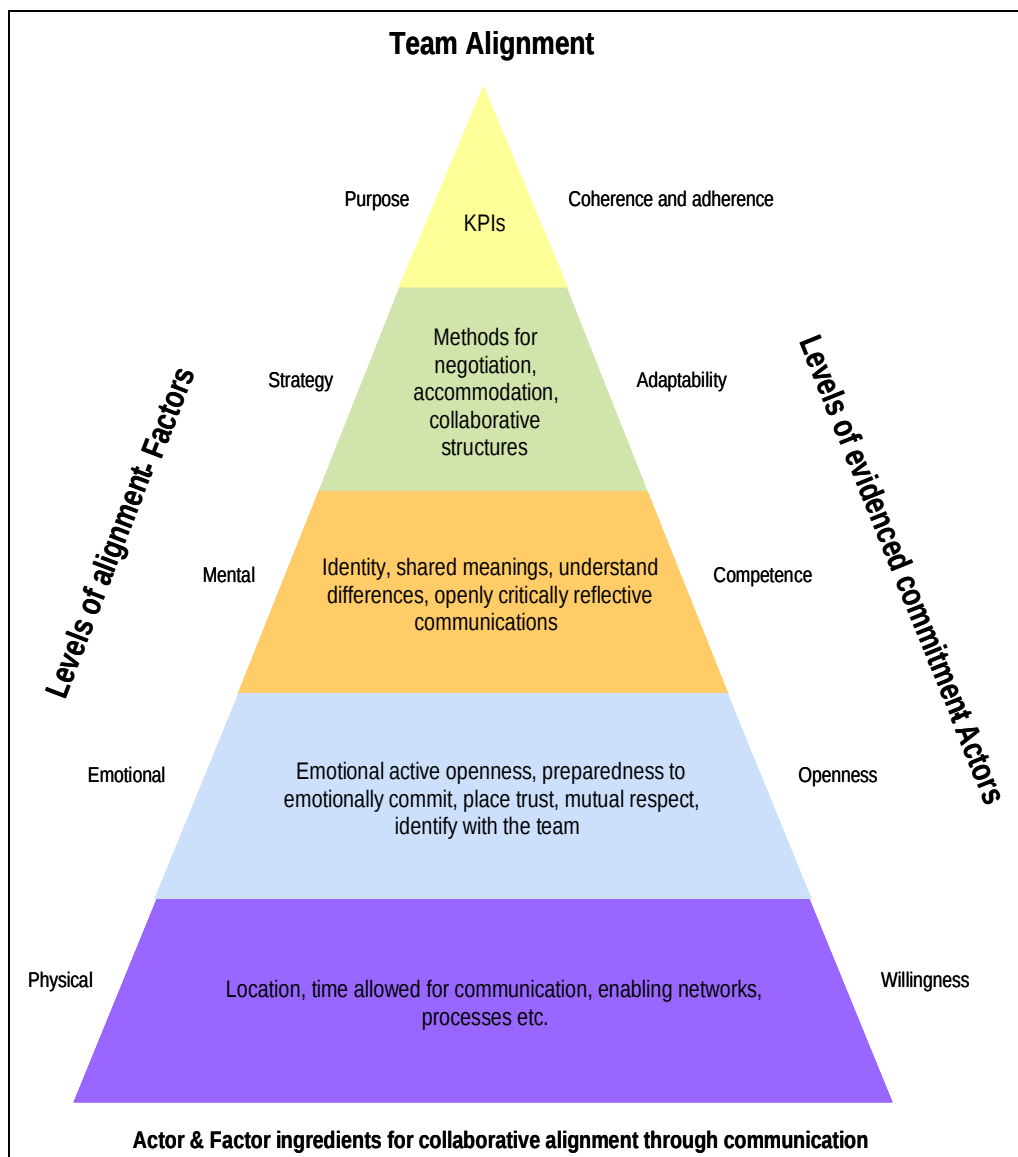
- Assess the quality and nature of an existing collaborative relationship; ,
- Design new approaches for team collaboration;
- Identify competency development training that may be required; and
- Serve as a process guide for the management of collaborative teams.

The model, presented below, includes brief descriptions of the levels and the actor and factor ingredients for each. A further explanation of the meanings of each level, and the nature of the success ingredients for collaborative alignment at each level includes:

- **Physical** – physical willingness and enabling; being present at the location and allocating the time to participate in a meeting, phone call, email exchange and so on; and having the processes in place to do so.
- **Emotional** – related to people; emotional active openness; being prepared to emotionally commit; preparedness to place trust; mutual respect; identify with the

team; participate in the formulation and alignment with the teams shared values; and willingness to align individual needs to the teams needs.

- **Mental** – willingness to listen to, and actively elicit, others perspectives; to seek to understand; appreciate and respect each other's cultural differences; capacity to listen and intelligently respond to critical constructive feedback; ability to self reflectively participate in the agreed collaborative practices and processes.
- **Strategy** – will to determine agreed priorities; being prepared to compromise to achieve strategic priorities; the adaptability to negotiate for a win/win; to accommodate the views of others; the design and management of collaborative structures (review boards, liaison relationships etc); and commitment to agreed processes and any necessary re-development of these.
- **Purpose** – clarity of focus on agreed team objectives; basing strategy and mental level discussions on the priorities inherent in a focus on the achievement of shared key performance indicators.



Emergent Insights Collaborative Alignment Model – Actor, factor and level descriptions.

Actor Competencies

Emergent Insights emphasises three main dimensions of actor competence in realising the benefits of the Collaborative Alignment Model. The three dimensions each relate to one of the levels. The emotional level is addressed through Emotional Intelligence (EQ) competencies. The mental level is addressed through Integral Theory perspectives. The strategy level is addressed through Adaptive Value Intelligence, or VQ. The 'physical' and 'purpose' levels are normally well defined for any team, and while of fundamental and crucial significance respectively, in our experience they are best refined through the inclusion of the other three levels of actor competency. Emergent Insights achieves more involved access to the 'physical' and 'purpose' levels in practice through the use of Systems theory and Futures studies respectively.

It is important to note that each of the competency groups needs to be developed for effective application, in a 'transcend and include' fashion. For example, it is extremely difficult to develop a competent grasp of Integral perspectives within a practical group situation without first developing the EQ competencies for enabling rich, respectful and relevant communication. This means, in practice, that the three dimensions of competency are not strictly defined in relationship to the levels of application outlined here. For example, EQ and Integral perspectives are fundamental to working with VQ, while VQ contributes to a deeper appreciation of both and enables a more refined achievement of competency with them. The model allows however, for an easy grasp of the differences between them, and highlights the important directional nature required for their most effective development in practice.

So just what is meant by EQ, Integral perspectives and VQ? Each of these dimensions of competency involve a significant body of knowledge developed over many decades of research. The main commonality between them is that they have all emerged out of the disciplines of psychology and sociology.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotion is a pervasive influence in teams and is fundamentally linked to how actors in teams interact and work together. The team therefore needs to intelligently manage emotion. Team Emotional Intelligence is defined as 'the ability to develop a set of norms [or cultures] that manage emotional processes in order to cultivate trust, group identity and group efficacy', and it is these collective attributes that facilitate the development of team member cooperation and collaboration at the emotional level.

A team will have difficulty managing emotion without a leader who has an above average EQ. The ideal however, is for all team members to be proficient in the EQ competencies of Self Awareness, Self Regulation, Self Motivation, Empathy and Social Skills. These competencies can be learned. The linkage between EQ and Integral perspectives is explained in the article 'Integral Project Management', and further information on Team Emotional Intelligence is available in the article on 'Emotionally Intelligent Teams'. (Both are available from www.emergence.net.au)

Integral Perspectives

Integral Theory is focused on integrating the diversity of perspectives that are inherent in human situations. A fundamental group of perspectives, that appears deceptively simple to understand, have been identified that characterise all human endeavours. These perspectives can be seen as the fundamental difference in the many fields of human knowledge and practice. Understanding the different perspectives, and the types of truth claim they have, the knowledge they generate, and the practical realities they inform, provides the basis for their integration.

Within a team context, each actor has access to each of these perspectives, and through a deeper appreciation of which one they, and other actors in their team, are predominantly using, two core tasks for integration can be facilitated. First, they can balance their perspectives when appropriate, situating their usual preference and opening up to understanding 'the whole picture.' Second, each actor can gain a deeper access to the orientation, priorities and language of other team members, perhaps using different preferred perspectives, allowing for a deeper degree of critically reflective communication to emerge. Having a 'whole picture', and being able to critically review its core components, is essential to achieving collaborative alignment at the mental level.

Adaptive Value Intelligence

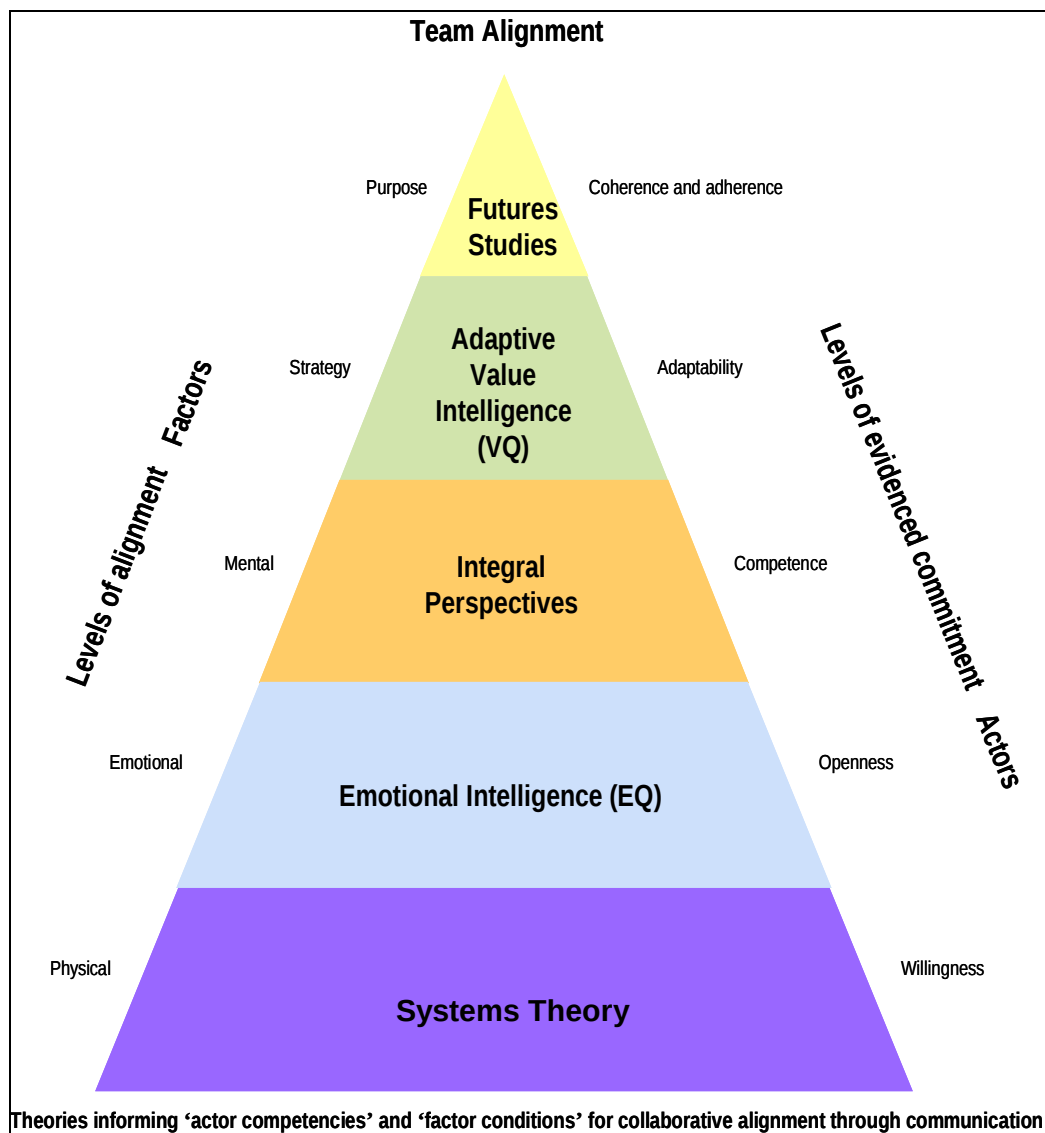
VQ is Emergent Insights name for a synthesis of research, theories and practice models dealing with human value systems, or worldviews. In addition to the fundamental perspectives, VQ adds a vertical dimension, a spectrum of worldviews based on deep structural difference in values. The worldviews represent an 'adaptive value intelligence' because they have, and do, emerge in response to the environmental complexities actors and teams experience. Once they have emerged, they remain available to the actor or team, and each serve very useful functions. Each worldview supports characteristic needs, reasoning, and relationship preferences in response to a perceived situation. Actors and teams often have preferred worldviews they operate from. When the actor and team worldviews are not synchronised, misunderstanding is common and team effectiveness is diminished.

Understanding the spectrum of common worldviews facilitates the development of a particular worldview, the integral value system. With an integral worldview, actors and teams are able to recognise the worldviews active in their environment, enabling access to a deep structural understanding of the utility of each within the team's context. This access allows for a deeper appreciation of the strategic priority of the contribution made from that worldview, within themselves, other actors, or as a team. This in turn, allows for another level of critically reflective discrimination on how to integrate the worldviews, and where compromise is most important for the achievement of team collaboration and team goals.

Factor Conditions

Enabling factors essentially refer to the external realities of actor and team communications. These often take the form, most fundamentally, of physical systems of communication, such as email, phone, meetings and the like. More significantly, these include such forms as established review panels, assessment criteria, and policies of relationship and communication the team operates under. Factor conditions in general include any other external constraints and influences on the communications environment of the team.

The degree to which the factor conditions are either enabling or constraining is significantly influenced through their design and management. These in turn are more competently addressed through the development of actor competencies that can assess the utility of the conditions, and actively renegotiate or more strategically accommodate them within the team's communication norms.



Emergent Insights Collaborative Alignment Model – Theoretical basis.

The Process

In simple terms, whether used as a diagnostic, design or competency development framework, the model also involves a simple process of application. When planning, reviewing, or otherwise conceptually preparing for collaborative alignment, the model is best used by working from the top level to the bottom levels, ensuring that the adequate actor competencies and factor ingredients are able to support alignment to the team's overall purpose.

In practice, for general management of collaborative alignment using this model, most situations are best approached from the bottom level upwards. Through an accumulative stock-take of actor competencies and factor ingredients the model allows for the deeper structural priorities of collaborative alignment to be followed as they lay the foundation for each successive level.

Understanding & Applying the Model

This presentation of Emergent Insights Collaborative Alignment Model is only a brief introductory overview. Emergent Insights consultants, Allen and Chris Stewart are available to discuss the origins, ingredients and application of this model to your situation. Through team workshops, coaching and collaborative consulting, Emergent Insights is dedicated to finding the most appropriate means for enabling collaborative alignment for your team.

The Collaborative Alignment Model and the behavioural competencies and communication techniques necessary to effectively implement it are covered in detail in Emergent Insights workshop Strategic Team Management – Perspectives, Values and Behavioural Competencies.

Contact Emergent Insights

For more information on this innovative and powerful approach to developing high performance teams contact Emergent Insights at info@emergence.net.au