

Culture as Competitive Advantage

How to align your staff, your strategies and the “what & why” that drives your customers’ decisions to buy
- or not to buy



Forté
MANAGEMENT

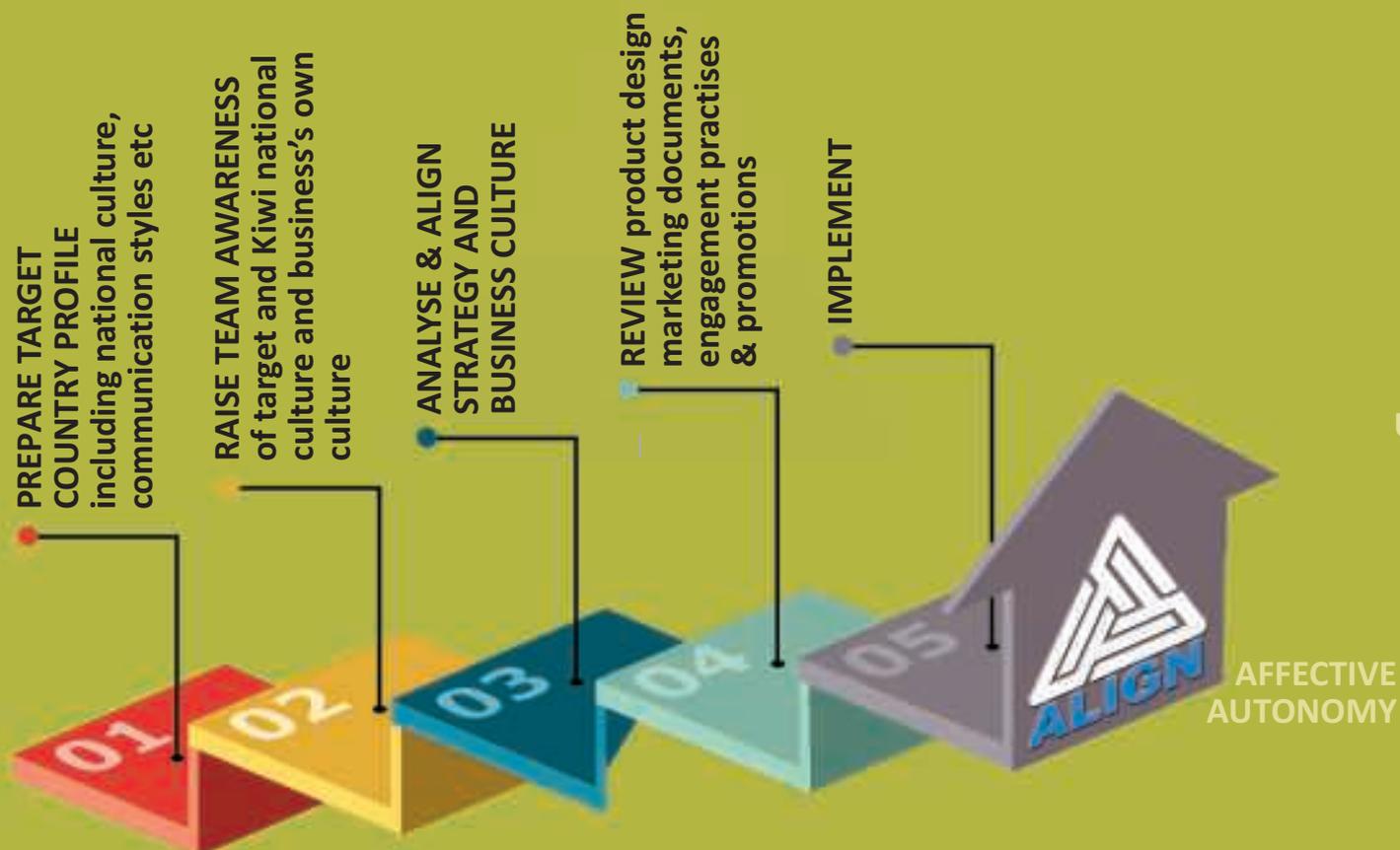
BUSINESS :
CONSULTING
COACHING
& TRAINING

Understanding your customers’ national cultures
may determine the future of your business



A five step framework to align your staff and strategies with your customers' values and purchase decision making

Forté Management's *ALIGN* is a unique tool to help businesses understand why their customers buy, how they prefer to do business, their deepest values, culture and business practices in unprecedented detail - then interpret them correctly and respond appropriately. Because all those things vary in important ways from one country to another, businesses require perfect alignment between their business culture, strategy and their customers' national cultures.





ALIGN Framework and National Culture – what it’s all about and what it can do for your business



Tony Alexander, Chief Economist BNZ - “One way (of improving export business performance) is by learning that there is a distinct NZ business culture. The expert in this area is Tony Smale of Forté Management.”

Forté Management’s *ALIGN* is all about understanding business and national cultures and how that can be worked into strategy and implementation for best possible results. Kiwi business culture and national culture are much more distinct than most of us recognise. And one thing we know with certainty – when business or national culture conflict with strategy, culture wins every time. Kiwi culture and mind-set results in a very particular way of managing including how we understand and engage with customers, how we manage staff, and indeed, how we create and capture profit. We are exceptionally good at initiating new things – products, markets, promotions, systems and processes - but according to former NZTE Chief Economist Gareth Chaplin “Kiwi businesses unwittingly let a surprising amount of value slip through their fingers.” One of the most significant reasons is because we pay insufficient attention to understanding our customers and consumers, their needs and motivations through their eyes perspective. When we dig deeper, discover new perspectives – and opportunities to go with them - we create the opportunity to craft a whole new high value business dynamic.

Five step *ALIGN* process drives performance

Forté Management’s *ALIGN* is a five step process that analyses business culture – actual and desired, compares the target customer’s national culture with Kiwi culture, increases staff knowledge and awareness, informs strategy and helps you implement in five core steps:

- PREPARE TARGET COUNTRY PROFILE including national culture, communication styles, business protocols, customs and superstitions
- RAISE TEAM AWARENESS of target and Kiwi national culture and the business’s own culture
- ANALYSE & ALIGN STRATEGY, BUSINESS CULTURE & NATIONAL CULTURE
- REVIEW product design marketing documents, engagement practises & promotions
- IMPLEMENT

The benefits you can expect

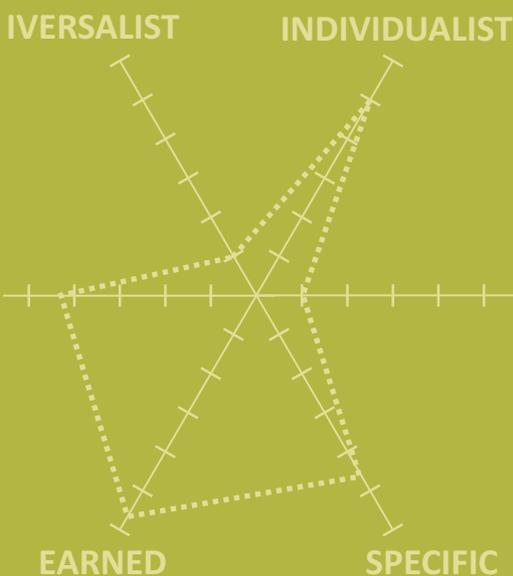
When you align all the elements your strategy will be able to leverage the good things about being Kiwi and how we do business with the things that appeal most to your customers.

You will be able to

- Align everything that you do to meet your customers’ expectations effectively and efficiently
- Equip your team so they can go well beyond just knowing how to do things like properly presenting your business card. Gain an in depth knowledge of how your customers make their decisions, the things that they consider important and we often take for granted – and vice versa
- Design and deliver your products, promotions and presentations for maximum customer appeal eliminating assumptions that traditional strategy relies upon. You will be able to shorten development cycles and reduce rework.
- Engage and build business relationships more successfully with fewer friction points;
- Have a better understanding of how much preparation and presentation is necessary to meet your customers’ expectations and know where that varies from Kiwi expectations.
- Extract more meaning and value from your market research.

In today’s multi-national, multi-cultural world, businesses need every possible facet of their operations aligned for optimum results. That includes strategy, business culture and national culture. When they are not aligned you encounter friction. When they are you create performance touch points right across your business.

- Ongoing advice, training and coaching to glue everything together and keep it that way.

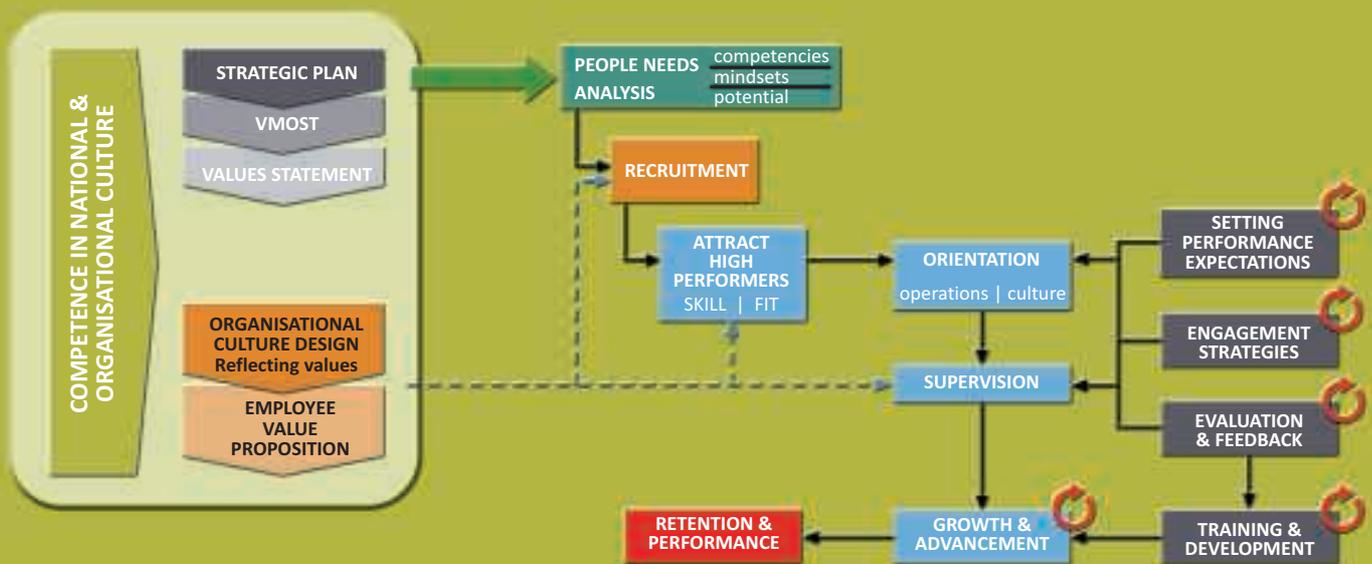




People Performance Management for 21st century Kiwi organisations

People with the right skills and right fit for your business are now so rare, and so sought after by other employers, that to succeed in the 21st century world, Kiwi firms need not just a business plan but also a *People Performance Plan*. Central to the plan is the *Employee Value Proposition* – those things that the firm will do to attract the best people, enable them to do their best possible work each day and retain their services for the optimum time. The Plan includes aligning strategy, organisational culture and management practices with deep understanding of Kiwi national culture and the national culture of staff attracted to New Zealand from around the globe.

The plan has two parts: 1) What sort of people are needed – skills, attitudes and cultural fit; and 2) how they will be attracted, aligned, embedded, grown, rewarded and retained. Forté Management’s fully integrated consulting, training and coaching approach to People Performance Management is unique and deeply embedded in latest research, deep practical experience and expertise in national and organisational culture. The diagram (below) shows the principal steps in the process. Managers need to align their strategies and operational practices with



The Forté Management *People Performance Management* model for 21st century Kiwi organisations in pursuit of performance excellence.

customers and consumers, and their people management as closely as possible with the default mental models of their staff. Only when this happens are the conditions for optimum people performance created.

Fact: The number one opportunity for Kiwi businesses is to improve the way human capital, AKA “people”, is managed and specifically people performance management. That’s official – up to 40% performance improvements are on offer to Kiwi managers. (Green R et al (2011) *Management Matters in New Zealand: How Does Manufacturing Measure Up?* Ministry of Economic Development Occasional Paper 11/03 March 2011)

As Kiwis through and through and proud of it – it saddens us to say that both in our experience and based on highly reputable research, Kiwi managers do not do people management well. In fact – let’s not beat around the bush – “While we are good at managing things – machines, processes and the like, we are poor, really poor at managing people performance.” That sounds terribly negative so let’s reframe it. “By changing the way that people performance is managed there are enormous opportunities available to Kiwi firms and their managers.”

		MANAGER	
		Kiwis	Immigrants/ Returned Ex-Pats
STAFF BEING MANAGED	Immigrants/ Returned Ex-Pats	Kiw: Many different cultures	Many: Many different cultures
	Kiwis	Kiw:Kiw	Many different cultures: Kiwi

There is no universal management formula, and especially no people management formula, despite what we are often led to believe. And the Golden Rule – “Do unto others as you would expect them to do unto you” is no more helpful as a guide – simply because other people’s needs and preferences may be quite different to your own. Now, as the demographics of our workforce changes, we have an unprecedented combination of managers and staff and their different national cultures – and hence the way they think, behave, manage and need to be managed. Managing people is about soft skills and integral to that is understanding national culture – Kiwi culture as the reference point and immigrant

cultures in order to tailor management styles for optimum outcomes. Remember that national culture determines **how people figure out how the world works and their role in it including what is right and wrong & how to tell the difference, how to relate to other people, especially relationships with individuals and groups, how and when to express feelings, how status and respect is determined and people’s relationship with time & nature.**

Two very simple examples may help illustrate: 1) As Kiwis we often describe ourselves as “*Straight shooting no BS people*”. Conversely people from other cultures, even those as similar as Brits and Australians find that Kiwis “*beat around the bush*”. **Here’s a challenge!** Approach someone from another culture – even someone as similar as an Australian or a Brit and ask them this question: “*In New Zealand how do you go getting a direct answer from Kiwis?*” We will lay a bet that the person will look a little sheepish (and because they come from another culture, any culture, they will be more inclined than Kiwis to provide a direct response), perhaps drop their head and whisper “*You don’t*”. 2) Most countries have equivalents of the Tall Poppy Syndrome but they don’t seem to do the same damage as in New Zealand. Otago University research shows that the typical Kiwi deliberately underperforms to avoid being wounded by the Tall Poppy Syndrome. These and many other elements have all sorts of implications for the way that we manage people. But here is the most important point of all. We are not trapped by our national culture – provided that we design our strategies in alignment with the people that we really are and for the people whose performance we want to optimise.

Self-understanding is at the heart of effective management – as an individual and as part of a national group. Forté Management’s **ALIGN People Performance Plan** is a unique tool to help managers develop the potential latent in the Kiwi workforce. Conversely, when they continue to pursue “conventional wisdom” they inevitably experience frustration and under performance.

Talk to us now on 0800 43 1010 or email tony@forte-management.co.nz

Practice discovers - Science proves

Forté Management

Business Consulting, Training, Coaching

Specialising in helping 21st century Kiwi businesses develop, grow & prosper

Forté Management is an independent thinking business consulting, coaching and training practice. Our unique insights to the way Kiwis think and behave (national culture) and the impact of that on innovation, people management and how we engage with customers, especially those from other cultures (a field in which we are number one) means we have a unique offering for our clients. We work with you to analyse and identify your opportunities to grow productivity and profit, build strategies and through our fully integrated consulting, coaching and training, support owners, managers and supervisors, equipping them with the tools and attitudes to create the culture and build relationships, systems, processes and dynamics essential for your employees to deliver their very best performance each and every day.

Are we HR consultants? No - but we are performance management consultants with a special focus on helping Kiwi businesses build strategies to grow their people performance, productivity and profit.



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