

WHAT IS LEAN ALIGNMENT PARTNERING™



Projects are built by people. These people assemble into teams. Teams are networks of people making commitments to each other.

Frankly, people tend NOT to be aligned. They have different needs, different personal goals; they have different moods and emotions. And essentially most people operate in their own self-interest.

But projects need people who are working together for a common interest: the project. How do we get the network of individuals to focus together on project goals, and then make choices and decisions based on a “Project First” mentality.

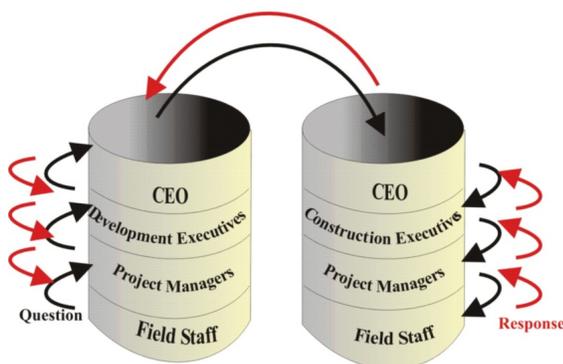
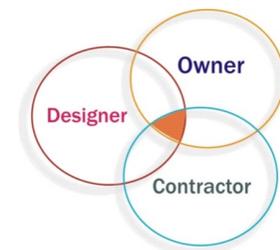
Lean Design and Construction is a project operating system based on Respect for People. We do not view other people as obstacles, or mere vehicles for accomplishing our goals. “Respect” values the individual, working collaboratively for the common goal, but all the while acknowledging the realities of being human.

Lean Alignment Partnering™ is facilitated meeting which acknowledges the realities of human beings working in a system. This facilitated meeting creates a neutral, safe space to identify and analyze common issues and problems and find ways to resolve them for the good of the project.

Lean Alignment Partnering™ elevates participants to the Third Level Thinking which we call “Project First Thinking”. The object of Project First Thinking is to allow people to focus on what is best for the project.

Three Levels of Thinking

1. **Level One Thinking** or Personal Thinking is all about personal safety: physical and emotional safety and career safety. We are born at this level. It is human – and necessary – to look out for oneself. It is important that we each feel safe in a work environment in order to create the opportunity for each of us to excel, contribute and take pride in the successful project. The personal and professional needs of people in any project have to be recognized and understood. We must Respect the individual, knowing that only in a productive, safe Level One working environment, can a person freely and effectively move up to working at Level Two.

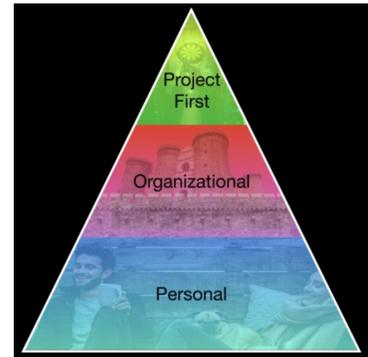


2. **Level Two Thinking** focuses on team and business outcomes and organizational successes. Attaining business goals contributes to the company’s health, growth and longevity. Level Two thinking is the fundamental bridge between the individual and his or her employer. Level Two thinking secures loyalty to the organization and fosters protection of the organization's interests.

WHAT IS LEAN ALIGNMENT PARTNERING™ (CONTINUED)

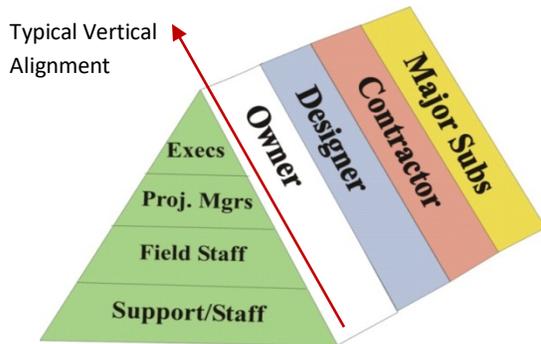


3. **Level Three Thinking:** Once a person feels personally safe and feels part of a Level Two team, he or she can begin focusing on the best interests of a given project. Contracts form where organizational interests overlap – at the Project Level. In order for people to function consistently at Level Three, they must feel safe and secure at Levels One and Two. But it is only at Level Three that “Project First” thinking lives and thrives. Likewise, only Project First thinking allows for true collaboration and trust in delivering the project.



Project Communication

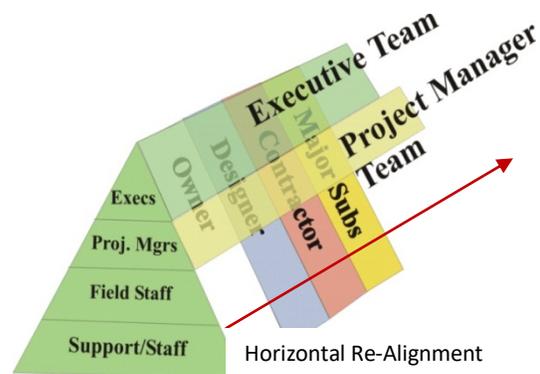
One of the most important goals of Lean Alignment Partnering™ is to insure that communication is clear, effective and efficient. Construction projects lend themselves to confusing, ineffective and inefficient communication. Typical communication between companies on jobs follows the “silo” pattern— answers to important questions have to be routed through the company, rather than being discussed at the appropriate level and having a joint response sent to the next management level.



In Lean Alignment Partnering™, project teams are established that more appropriately reflect both the job and the level of authority of the professionals on the project. Rather than the typical vertical configuration of company teams, project teams are realigned or configured horizontally to reflect authority and responsibility to the Project.

Thus, the executive officers from the Owner, the Contractor (and its major Subcontractors), the CM and the Designer form an Executive Team to make decisions regarding the Project.

Project managers from each company form a separate team to focus the work on the Project, forecast risks and opportunities, meet to decide what recommendations to make to the executive team regarding risks or problems that have arisen on the job and engage in the management of the construction. Field and Office teams deal with implementation on site, supervision of crews, inspections etc., but all with the objective of maximizing the “Project First” effort of all of the horizontal Project teams.



Innovative Project Delivery

Innovative delivery models like Design Build and Integrated Project Delivery have influenced how we partner projects, even Design-Bid-Build projects. Ideas gleaned from Lean Construction theory have also informed our processes so that we have been able to design new, more collaborative and reliable partnering models. Lean Alignment Partnering™ incorporates techniques and strategies learned from IPD and Design-Build to implement the five principles promoted by the more collaborative delivery models:

- 1) **Real Project Collaboration:** Projects are built by people. The collaboration of all job participants in all aspects of the project is crucial to timely, cost-effective delivery. But in an often adversarial contractual atmosphere (us vs. them), collaboration does not just “happen” by itself. It must be fostered by consciously building healthy personal relationships and sustained by intentional effort. Lean Alignment Partnering™ leads participants to regularly focus their collaborative discussions on intermediate priorities and forecast risks (to mitigate them) and opportunities (to enhance them).
- 2) **Increase the Relatedness of Project Participants:** An old saying on construction projects is that participants come together as strangers and leave as enemies. We can change that paradigm by developing project relationships founded on trust and sustained by reliable performance. When conflicts and disputes inevitably arise, they can best be resolved quickly in an atmosphere of trust and openness with conscious processes that allow resolution at the lowest horizontal cross-organizational level and the participants operating in a “Project First” mentality.
- 3) **Projects are Networks of Commitments:** The fundamental building blocks of design and construction are commitments: “I will accomplish this task today, so that you can accomplish that task tomorrow”. Productivity in every industry **except construction** has more than doubled in the last 50 years. One of the chief reasons construction productivity has actually decreased in that period of time is the lack of reliable commitments—industry studies reveal that on typical projects only about 54% of what people say they will do in any week is actually performed. Increasing the performance of people’s commitments (Percent of Promises Complete each week) is central to increasing productivity while maintaining costs and schedule.
- 4) **Project First Thinking:** Rather than optimizing the parts of the project, the participants must optimize the whole project itself. Lean Alignment Partnering™ drives people to Project First Thinking which enables project leaders to think in terms of the best “interests” of the project rather than the legalistic “rights” of the parties, all the while showing Respect for the individuals. Cross-organizational, horizontal teams can be taught to work in unity and to elevate issues upward to obtain authority to solve problems and keep the Project First.
- 5) **Couple Learning with Action:** What we learn from the Project every week needs to be communicated to all participants so that mistakes are not made again and again. This applies directly to safety but also to production and the systems of production. How we pave the first three sections of the highway can inform how we pave the last sections, not just how we pave the next job. Lean Alignment Partnering™ fosters robust feedback systems enabling a team’s continuous reflection, learning and action on lessons learned.