

The Yoke of Influence

Aligned Influence™

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My family has been farmers for many generations. My grandfather often spoke of farming with horse drawn equipment instead of tractors. The last team of horses he used were named Sam and Jeff. They were named after his grandfathers, Sampson Johnson and Jefferson Elliott. Sam and Jeff were considered a good team because they were well paired and pulled evenly against the yoke to complete the work.

A recent consulting experience reminded me of those stories. The executive director of the organization I was working with reframed the relationship between the executive director and the board of directors as being “yoked together” in

completing the work of the organization successfully. It made sense to everyone in the room and immediately became one of my favorite metaphors in explaining the Aligned Influence model.

The Aligned Influence model describes the responsibilities of the board of directors and the executive director in three ordered pairs of responsibilities. The board directs the organization and the executive leads the organization. The board protects the organization and the executive manages the organization. The board enables the work of the organization and the executive accomplishes the work of the organization.

The board’s yoke is to direct, protect and enable the work of the organization. The executive’s yoke is to lead, manage and accomplish the work of the organization. Only by fully leaning into their portion of the yoke together, do they ensure that the organization is successful.

Boards direct by defining what the organization should accomplish, protect by establishing boundaries to be respected by the executive, and enable the organization through advocacy, resource development and maintaining discipline to their role.

Executives lead by planning for change in operational tactics and strategies, as direction from the board and

challenges and opportunities in their community change. They manage by implementing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure on-time, on-budget and on-target delivery of products and services as they accomplish the work of the organization.



Boards and executives must learn to be disciplined to their role. They must learn that their role is important in and of itself, and that they can trust the other to be disciplined to their role as well. Only then can both “lean into” their portion of the organization’s leadership work and be successful together.

Boards and executives both influence the organization with responsibility to the community to whom they are responsible and in service to those that benefit from their products and services. The secret to excellence in their roles is achieving alignment; alignment of their roles, with both working together for a common goal. Alignment with the community they serve, ensuring they continue to provide services that are appropriate

and focused on meeting the needs identified by that community.

The professionals at Aligned Influence LLC are ready to assist your organization in its next step toward the excellence that you desire. Whether you have years invested in a Policy Governance model or are just beginning your journey to organizational excellence from the top, we are ready to assist you. If you would like to discuss our services further, please visit us at www.alignedinfluence.com or contact us at 303-257-1794.