

Aligning Ferret: How an Organization Meets Extraordinary Challenges

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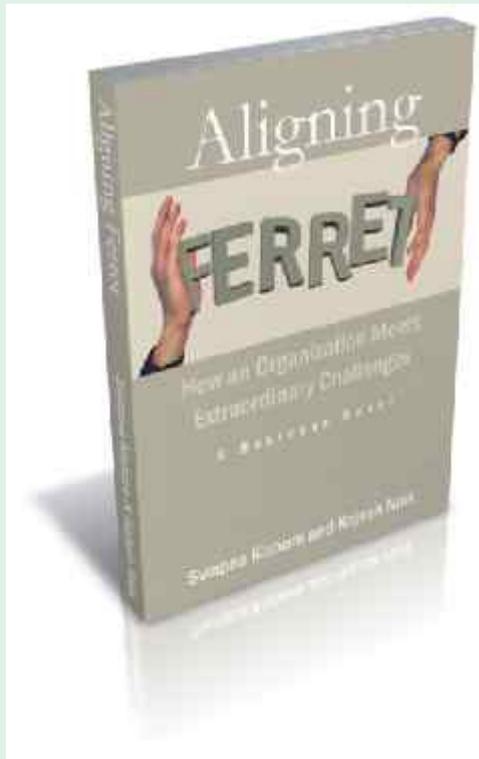
Aligning Ferret is a business novel that uses an engrossing story to illustrate an implementation of concepts related to organizational strategy, performance alignment, and people management.

Sunil Chinnappa, a manager at a Bangalore-based software firm, Ferret, has just implemented world-class processes to deliver high-quality software. But his self-

congratulatory mood is cut short when Jim, the COO of the firm that owns Ferret, blasts Ferret for poor performance and threatens it with closure.

Through *Aligning Ferret*, the reader shares Sunny's effort to achieve the extraordinary growth Jim demands of Ferret. The managers at Ferret learn and apply relevant concepts, models and frameworks (such as strategy maps, Balanced Scorecard, and People CMM). They focus on performance management systems and on competencies to achieve overambitious targets. They balance this effort with already-existing project deadlines, high attrition rates, and ongoing glitches and conflicts.

An aligned organization knows its objectives and focuses on achieving them. Strategy and alignment are not confined to top honchos deciding policy in boardrooms. All employees need to understand these concepts to work effectively within the organizational framework. *Aligning Ferret's* engrossing and realistic story makes strategy, alignment, performance management, and related concepts a quick grasp for readers.



Q & A

What is *Aligning Ferret* about?

Aligning Ferret is a business novel. It uses a crisis in a fictional organization, Ferret, to explore how its managers align organizational strategy and performance management systems to survive. Our



intent is to stimulate readers and provide them with a starting point to pursue these essential concepts.

What is a business novel?

A business novel is a teaching story. It uses a business setting, complete with characters, conflicts, and plot elements, to explore relevant concepts. The readers grasp the concepts as they get involved with people who struggle to resolve/ avert problems, at times succeeding, and at times failing.

The use of stories to teach is as old as epics and mythological stories; Aesop's fables and Panchatantra are examples of using fiction to make lessons fun. A business novel extends this concept in a contemporary organizational context.

Examples of well-known business novels are: *The Goal*, *Necessary But Not Sufficient*, *The Critical Chain* (all by Goldratt) and *The One Minute Manager* (Blanchard and Johnson).

Coverage in Newspapers, Magazines, Journals and Blogs

Business World: "... an interesting story of such an alignment at a Bangalore-based IT company....the ease with which they bring in concepts such as Lead-lag effect, Balanced Scorecard, MBQM, CMM is commendable...."

domain-b.com (online business magazine): "...a business novel blending organizational strategy and performance management into the twists and turns of a well-told story...."

Windows & Aisles (In-flight magazine, Paramount Airways): "...creates an engrossing storyline set in a business environment....this book will help enrich the capabilities of senior managers...."

CXO Insights (Blog): "Aligning Ferret is a wonderful business novel that packs not just several interesting events and humorous situations, but also several deep insights for CXOs, Delivery Heads, Quality Professionals and Project Managers."

Journal of the QAI Global Institute: "...fast-paced fiction with practical discussions of the uses and value of CMMI, People CMM and Balanced Scorecard....Ferret is a great story that teaches us lessons about business, about life, and about balancing and aligning all the pieces...."

Express Computers: "... a unique book insofar as it combines the virtues of a fast-paced work of literary fiction along with a book that introduces several concepts that are relevant to any rapidly growing....unusually, for a book like this, it works extremely well...."

Bookworm Reads (Blog): "... very effectively captured the essence of corporate planning through this "business novel"....established business strategy tools like Balanced Score Card, MBQM, CMM is commendable...."

Malcolm Balridge Quality Model and P-CMM: "...realistic, strong and tight in its narration....a real page turner....best thing is its sense of humor. I found myself breaking into smile, chuckling and laughing out aloud at least twenty times..."

Resonance (Blog): "...definitely a very good read both for its informative content and excellent narrative style...."

Management Next: "... provides a fictional setting to understand 'alignment' concepts necessary for survival in today's corporate world...."

Where is this story set?

Aligning Ferret is set in a Bangalore-based 400-people software firm. Ferret is jolted into action when its new owners, PTI, have extraordinary expectations and threaten to close Ferret if these are not met.

The reader experiences six months of Ferret's struggle through the first-hand account of Sunny Chinnappa, a senior project manager supporting the CEO in rescuing Ferret. As Sunny and colleagues orient themselves to meet the challenges, readers get drawn into practical and conceptual aspects of aligning an organization to a strategy. They focus on defining and cascading goals, managing performance, motivating individuals, setting up competency frameworks, and ensuring employee involvement at all levels. All this has to be achieved while

business is running as usual. Readers see the ongoing organizational conflicts, attrition, sudden arrival of projects, shortage of people, and creaky infrastructure. Characters have their own quirks and personal problems.

Tell us more about the concepts covered in the book.

As Ferret works to meet its challenges, it considers different models and frameworks like strategy maps, Balanced Scorecard (BSC), People CMM® (PCMM) and Malcolm Baldrige (MBNQA) to define strategy and improve its alignment. Performance management systems and competency frameworks are refined to ensure high degrees of alignment to strategy. Measurement systems are set up and metrics are used to monitor progress and take corrective action. Other

concepts woven into the story include effective organizational communication and employee involvement.

Would one be able to implement the concepts after reading the book?

Not immediately. *Aligning Ferret* provides an introduction to the concepts, and a setting to experience some implementation issues. The book also includes questions to make you ponder, and lists resources (books, papers, websites) to learn more.

To implement the concepts in your situation, you need to study them in more detail, and understand their relevance and applicability for your specific role and organization. This website includes links to [resources](#) that can help you.

If one is not a policy maker or senior manager, would the book be relevant?

Yes. Every member of an organization, regardless of role and position, is affected by the alignment and misalignment that exists in an organization. *Aligning*

Ferret will help you observe and understand the behavior of your bosses, colleagues and juniors. You will become more alert about misalignments in your own team. You can improve your team's focus on its goals through better measurement systems while operating in the strategy framework of your organization. Team motivation and involvement shall improve as everyone understands how their work contributes to the organizational goals. You will be confident and effective while participating in organizational initiatives, and respond to opportunities for improvement and growth.

Why did you write the book?

We've written many serious books, so this time, to introduce the concepts we wanted to cover, we used a fun approach. We created a fictitious company, filled it with fictitious people, and plunged our 'hero', Sunny, in an unenviable situation where he has to implement concepts he has never heard of. He learns as he goes along, and with him, so does the reader. We had fun writing it; let's hope you enjoy reading it.

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