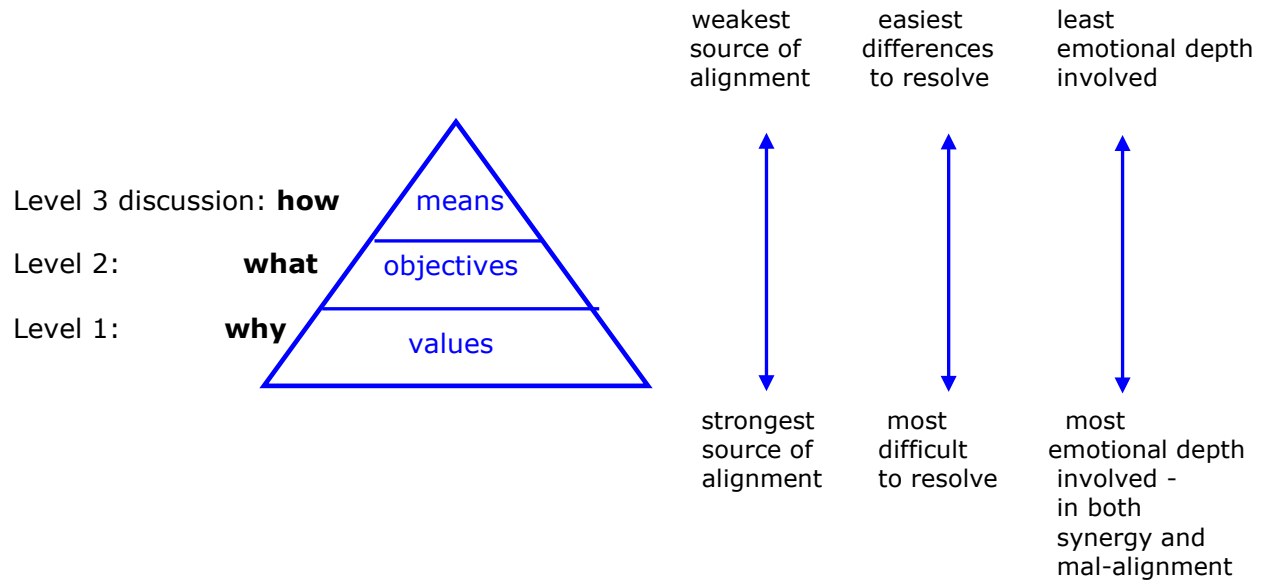


## CONVERSATIONS FOR ALIGNMENT

### "The Alignment Pyramid"



Unstructured or hurried work place conversations tend to move back and forth between discussion of goals and discussion of strategies (levels 2 and 3), without parties having a clear awareness of these shifts in focus. It is also common for discussions to get bogged down in debate over different strategies. Workplace conversations rarely involve discussion of purpose and values (level 1). As a result, workplace conversations can too readily result in poor alignment between people, difficulties in coordinating efforts to achieve out comes, and negative conflict.

One of the main causes for destructive and entrenched conflict in workplaces is the perception by one party or group that their objectives and/or values, are under threat by another party. Additionally, it is assumed that this is the deliberate intention of the other party. This is a common scenario between leaders or groups of different business units with different and potentially competing functions, such as, for example a finance unit versus an operational or sales unit.

## Sequence of “Conversations for Alignment”

Workplace conversations are most effective when they proceed in the sequence of “the alignment pyramid”:

Level 1 discussions: **Purpose, Values and Identity**

→ Level 2 discussions: **Goals and objectives**

→ Level 3 discussions: **The means / strategy**

### Level 1 Discussions – Purpose, Values and Identity

Discussions of *Values and purpose* are “**Why**” discussions. For example “Why does the work we do matter? How does it add value for the community, for me, and in what way. How does it connect to, or express what matters to me?”

### Level 2 Discussions - Goals and objectives

Discussions of *Objectives and goals* are “**What**” discussions. For example, “What outcomes are we aiming for?” Level 2 discussions are essential for uncovering *intentions*.

### Level 3 Discussions - means and strategy

Discussions of *means and strategy* are **How** discussions. For example, “How are we going to achieve this?” The “what, who and when” of planning.

### Face to Face

Conversations for alignment need face to face forums. Follow up can occur by other forms like phone or email, but not the initial phases of relationship building.

### Time Allocation

Conversations achieve alignment when *sufficient time* is allocated for each level discussion. This is most important for level 1 discussions. The time invested early in the process brings good returns in saved time afterwards.

### Benefits

Conversations for alignment enable parties in leadership and staff roles to establish the common ground at the level of values – the aspect of our personal and professional lives that we feel most passionate about. This builds the collaborative foundation on which to plan, solve problems and prevent and resolve conflicts.