

Square Peg – Round Hole, No More!

By Rod Kempton

Coach and Success Strategist
Developing Options into Integrated Success Strategies

Why is the culture inconsistent across our organization?

Why do high potential employees in our Succession Plan leave after we move them to another department for a skill expanding experience?

Why was I successful in one department and then crash and burn in another?

How do I recruit and select prospective employees that fit in here?

Why do I feel like we keep trying to shove a square peg in a round hole?

In recent professional association meetings, I presented this **Employee Performance, Selection, and Engagement Business Model** that demonstrates the answers to these questions. It visually presents how cascading **Values, Mission, and Strategies** throughout an organization inherently creates multiple environments. It serves as a framework for discussing the different environments and how they impact **applicant job search, employee recruitment, selection, retention, engagement and succession planning**.

Top leaders establish organization *values, mission* and *strategies*. As middle managers interpret the mission and strategies into actions specific to their department's responsibilities, they further define those values, mission and strategies. So, by nature, organizations create different internal environments that need to be understood for the elements that make them unique.

Consider the inherent nature of Accounting. Its actions are to maintain the fiscal accountability of the organization.

Consider Sales and Marketing. Their actions are to attract customers and ensure they buy the product.

Consider Manufacturing. Its actions are to construct the product the customer buys.

Each set of actions are critical to the overall organization's success.

Each represents a necessary interpretation of the organization's values, mission, and strategies. Each creates a unique environmental within the organization.

Competency Models frame the grouping of *skills*, *knowledge* and *abilities* required in employee jobs/roles. These are effective tools used for consistency in employee recruitment, selection and performance management. However, because of multiple environments as described above, the same role may be experienced differently across the organization. While identified competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities are present; other elements of human dynamics such as personal values, strengths and attributes impact employee success.

The “right hire, right fit, right job, and right organization” is the vision of every job seeker, employee, and employer.

What makes “fit” right?

When people clarify their values, strengths, and attributes, they are better able to define an environment where they will flourish. When they find the best environmental “fit” for their values, strengths and attributes they can better use their competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities.

The same *value* may differ in definition across an organization. Take the value of *Integrity*. It’s claimed as core by most organizations. A common definition of integrity for an organization could be, “*doing the right thing at all times.*” Might that show up differently in different departments? How might *integrity* be experienced in Accounting, Sales and Marketing, or in Manufacturing (or any other operations department) in your organization? What are different ways in which *integrity* may present itself across an organization?

Consider the case of a wall covering wholesaler with a \$1 million order to be used in hotel guest rooms.

The wall covering representative has been working with the client for two years on this sale as the design process and early construction continued. The customer, having experienced several construction delays, is now ready to sign and they need the product in 7 weeks to meet their construction schedule. The Accounting Manager is concerned about payment as this particular construction project is reputed to have financial problems, so they press for a standard three week financial review of the sale before any production supplies are purchased. The fabrics have an 8 to 10 week production schedule including purchase of various materials required before production can begin.

In this case, consider *integrity* in Accounting – consistently follow established policy and legal procedures to maintain fiscal accountability. Consider *integrity* in Marketing and Sales – do what is needed to make the sale and satisfy the customer. Consider *integrity* in Manufacturing – faithfully follow production process to create a product of consistent quality. Are they different? How does this help describe each environment?

Consider the following examples of strength or attributes of employees.

Accounting – an employee has a strong process focus and attention to detail, can interpret possible client problems and patiently explain correct procedures to a client who might use them infrequently. Sales and Marketing – a salesperson has the ability to listen to a customer, help them select the best product, and collaborate across the organization to resolve any issues that might delay delivery. Manufacturing – a line person shows attention to production detail so that each build procedure is followed specifically, each component is installed correctly, and all quality control measures are verified to produce a customer satisfying product.

From these brief examples, we can see that the environment of each department is actually defined by a combination of *values, strengths, attributes, competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities* required of, and exhibited by, its successful employees. They are in an environment where they can use their *strengths and attributes*, along with their *skills, knowledge, and abilities*; and can fulfill their responsibilities in alignment with their personal core values. This alignment is what creates employee engagement. This combination of elements is actually the most complete description of the specific environment. Then, a hiring manager must use this information to recruit and select prospective employees that are a best “*fit*” for the department. Organizational managers must look at internal succession plans with a more complete alignment in mind. Stronger alignments create stronger employee engagement.

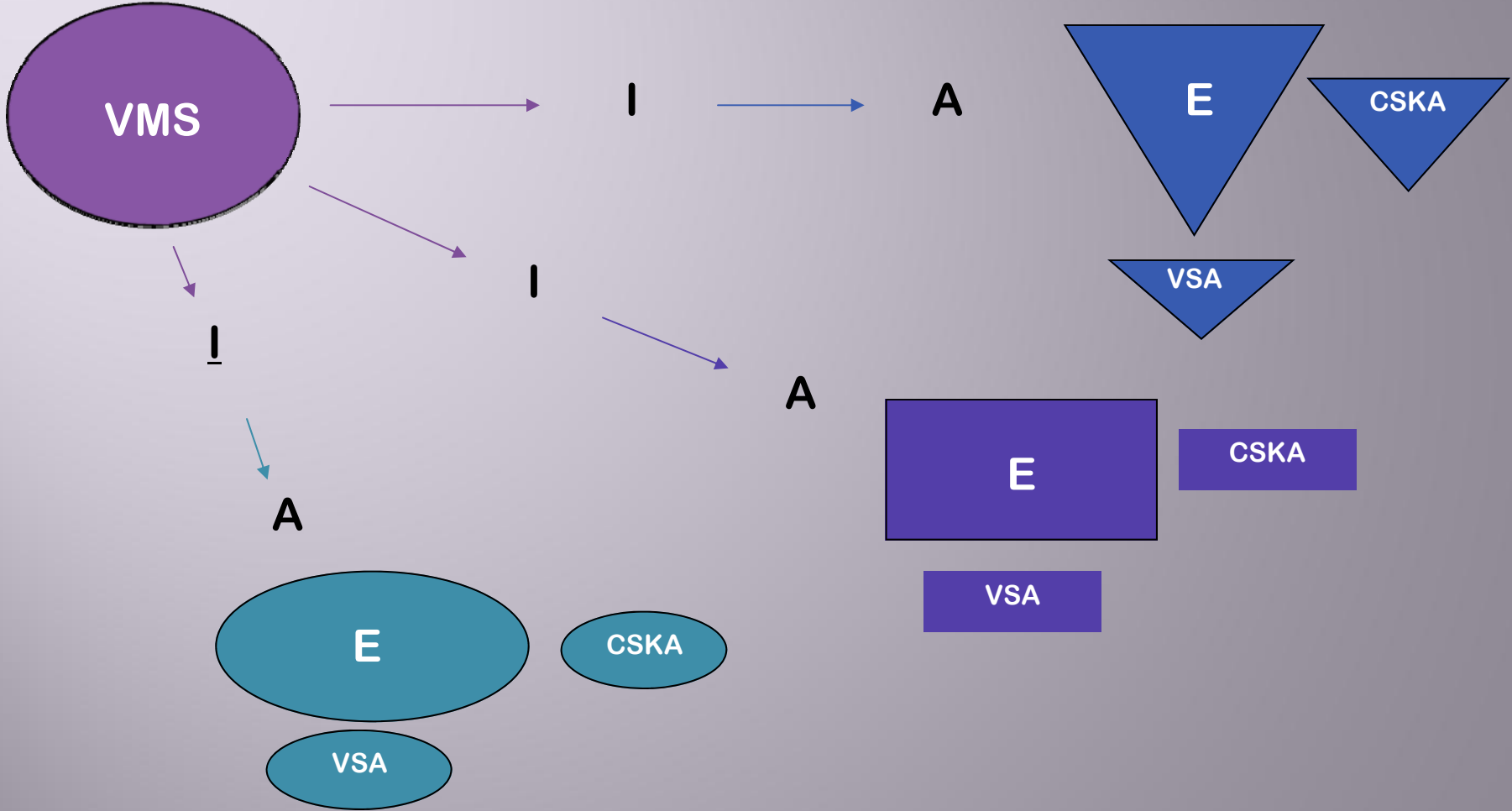
As job seekers clarify personal values, strengths and attributes, they can further define the environmental alignment where their competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities can be best used.

The model demonstrates why culture will be different across an organization.

- Succession plans will be successful as they verify strong alignment of critical environmental elements when considering a skill expanding experiences for high potential employees.
- Employees considering internal career opportunities will be more successful when they verify strong alignment of critical environmental elements in another department.
- Hiring managers can recruit and select prospective employees that fit when they verify strong alignment of their critical environmental elements.
- Job seekers can investigate the environment as well as the job when informational and applicant interviewing.

These are the answers that remove the problem of trying to shove a square peg into a round hole.

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE, SELECTION, AND ENGAGEMENT BUSINESS MODEL



(VMSIAE) VALUES, MISSION, STRATEGY, INTERPRETATION, ACTION, ENVIRONMENT

(CSKA) COMPETENCIES, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITY

(VSA) VALUES, STRENGTHS, ATTRIBUTES