

Chapter Seven — Six Basic Alignment Triggers Can Get People To Form Groups In Almost Any Setting

When people in any setting are internally divided — aligned in various ways as separate groups of people inside the setting — it can be very difficult to get people in that setting to work together in cooperative and collaborative ways as a group.

When people in any setting are internally divided, it can be extremely difficult to have that setting function with a high degree of interpersonal and intergroup trust.

Division contains the seeds of dysfunctionality in communities, schools, organizations, or work places.

In very clear contrast to being divided — when people in any setting have a sense of being a working and aligned group for that setting, then it is much easier in that setting to achieve collective goals and shared objectives — and it is much easier to achieve a sense of internal Peace and harmony for that setting.

We are much more likely to achieve Peace in any setting when the people in that setting have a sense of being, at some relevant and functioning level, an “Us.”

So creating a sense of “us” is a good thing to do if your goal in any setting is to achieve Peace. That can usually be done.

We actually have the ability to create multiple definitions of “us” that can each have the ability to generate the benefits of being “us” in a wide variety of settings. So our challenge and our opportunity in each setting is often to figure out how to incent and trigger people to create and form a functioning and effective level of us — a kind of internal alignment — for that setting.

Figuring out how to achieve those goals of triggering a sense of group alignment in various settings was one of my first major challenges that I took on as an analyst, strategist, and author when I began looking at our various intergroup issues, processes, and realities.

It turned out to be possible to achieve that sense of alignment a very high percentage of the time. There are six basic triggers that we can use to do that work of creating alignment that work well in a very wide range of settings.

Those tools anchor *The Art of InterGroup Peace* as a key set of field-tested strategies and approaches that can create the foundation for intergroup Peace in any setting where they are used.

I have personally used those tools in multiple settings and I have used them many times. I have used them to run companies, to chair trade associations, boards and commissions, to create coalitions, to build cultures, and to support public health and public policy agendas — and those basic alignment triggers have been useful to me in every setting.

I Began In Sun Tzu's Debt

Those tools are useful in business settings and they also can be used to deal with intergroup issues in larger community settings.

We need to use those tools in any setting — large or small — where we want people to feel a sense of alignment as a group. They can be used at a worksite, a school, or a community setting to create a functional sense of group bonding and alignment in that setting.

Our thought processes are very similar in all of our intergroup and interpersonal settings. Certain factors drive us apart — and those factors should generally be avoided.

Other factors can bring us together — and those factors should be used very directly to create alignment that help us achieve our collective goals.

We need to have a clear working understanding of the key functions that can trigger alignment and can bring us together and we need to use those factors to create situational alignment everywhere that alignment is needed.

Six of those trigger points are described below.

I now have that set of functional alignment trigger tools in my tool kit and I use it all the time. The tools that I have created in the process have actually been very useful to me in a wide array of settings. Those alignment triggers have been well tested. I have used them to get many people in a wide range of settings aligned.

Those tools anchor the key strategies for *The Art of InterGroup Peace*.

Sun Tzu Pointed To The Unifying Impact Of Danger

As I started looking to figure out what tools might be useful to do that work, I had an inspiration from a very old service. Sun Tzu, in the book *The Art of War*, pointed me very clearly to one very effective and easy to activate alignment trigger — shared danger. He explained that danger could create unity.

Sun Tzu wrote that “When the Men of Wu and the Men of Yueh — enemies to each other — find themselves on a sinking boat, they would abandon their hatred and they would come together to save the ship.”

I began my thinking on those sets of triggers that can bring people together in Sun Tzu’s debt.

Sun Tzu, in *The Art of War* wrote that shared danger could be a sufficient trigger and catalyst to bring different groups together, even when they had been opposed to each other and actually may have been enemies before their shared danger became relevant to them.

I could see from my own life and from my own experience in work settings and in the communities where I lived that Sun Tzu was right. Danger unites people. Sun Tzu said that when enemies were together on a sinking ship, they would unite to save the ship.

I could see that when there are floods or fires, entire communities come together to fight the floods or fires — and it was clear that people set aside prior intergroup differences to collectively respond to the danger created by the flood or fire.

I could see that when people were convinced that a danger existed, those people could be aligned if it was clear to the people that alignment could, in fact, help mitigate or reduce the danger.

With that basic belief and concept in mind, I started to build my working list of alignment triggers using that exact same trigger — danger — as the anchor trigger for the list.

Maslow's Hierarchy Of Needs Was Equally Inspirational

I was also very directly inspired in the process of building my list of alignment triggers by Dr. Abraham Maslow's famous "Hierarchy of Needs" work. I loved his way of thinking about personal priorities.

Dr. Maslow offered us brilliant insight into the factors that can motivate each of us personally at different stages and different circumstances for our lives.

Dr. Maslow built a very workable list of influence factors that had six motivation triggers included in it. Dr. Maslow identified how each factor on his list worked.

He also identified the relative power and the relative impact of each trigger. He used a pyramid format to display his sets of "needs" — with the most powerful need at the bottom of his pyramid.

In putting together my own list of group alignment trigger, I borrowed shamelessly from Dr. Maslow's insight and approach.

I also used a similar pyramid based graphic visualization tool for my instinctive group alignment triggers. I very intentionally built my own alignment trigger pyramid to look like his pyramid.

Instead of building a Hierarchy of Needs pyramid, I put together a Group Hierarchy of Alignment Triggers pyramid.

We both put danger at the base of our pyramid.

Danger Is At The Base Of Both Pyramids

Dr. Maslow put danger at the base of his pyramid as a highly powerful motivator and said that danger tends to be the single most powerful personal motivator when it is functionally relevant in a person's life.

Danger also anchors the group alignment trigger pyramid. Danger is also, I believe, a very powerful motivation factor for groups of people and creates clear patterns of collective behavior when it is activated.

I know from both observation and personal experience that a sense of danger could — as Sun Tzu said — bring people together to work toward a common goal.

Dr. Maslow knew that when people feel a sense of danger, that sense can be the highest priority decision-making factor for a person. He made it clear that responding to that particular motivator can become the primary need for the person who feels a sense of danger.

Dr. Maslow capped his pyramid with a goal of self-actualization — or personal fulfillment. He believed that people who don't have competing, conflicting, or offsetting priorities on any of the other motivation levels will take on behaviors and will create personal activity priorities and behaviors that can lead to personal fulfillment.

Like Dr. Maslow, I also put a group and individual actualization goal at the top of the alignment trigger pyramid. I also used mission or vision as the sixth level alignment motivation factor.

For the group alignment pyramid, I put the goal and the motivational trigger of mission or vision at the pyramid peak.

I knew from experience and from observation in multiple settings that groups could be brought together and groups could be aligned using the trigger and the motivation of a shared mission or a common vision.

As a person who managed companies for a living, I knew when I started to build that list that it can be extremely useful to have the people in

any organization have a clear sense of mission and a clear vision both for where the organization is going and for what the organization should be doing.

So the two pyramids have similarities.

Both pyramids have a foundation level base-line motivator of perceived danger and both pyramids have a peak top-level motivator of perceived mission or actualization.

Danger Can Trump Mission For Individuals — But Mission

Can Trump Danger For Groups

In Dr. Maslow's pyramid, danger can — and usually does — overpower a sense of mission. Survival, in his paradigm, very consistently trumps vision. He believed that if you discover at a personal level that you are drowning, you will stop writing a poem and you will focus on not drowning.

In my own group alignment trigger pyramid building process, I saw that survival issues and a clear sense of danger could actually be the top priority for some people and can trump mission. I knew that a sense of personal danger could trump and overpower many people's sense of group purpose and mission — just like the process embedded in Dr. Maslow's

hierarchy. But it was also clear to me that there are people in the world whose sense of mission can and does overpower and trump their sense of danger.

As I looked at the overall alignment trigger pyramid from a broader perspective, I ultimately began to understand that the mission/vision motivator for some people in some tribal, political, ideological, or religious settings could actually overpower and overcome a sense of danger.

I saw that the vision or belief system for many people could continue to be the main motivator for those people's behavior even in the face of very real threats and very real danger.

The two pyramids do not parallel each other beyond that point. I identified four other motivation factors that obviously bring people together in alignment with each other when the people share a sense of the trigger being personally relevant to them as both individuals and members of groups.

It became clear to me that there are four other very commonly used motivators — including shared gain, a common identity, resisting a common enemy, and various levels of team collective behaviors — that can cause people to be motivated, guided, and triggered into clearly aligned behavior.

Each of those triggers can cause people in a setting to work together. Each of those six triggers can cause people to have a sense of shared status as an aligned group when the triggers are relevant and when they are perceived to be true.

I built the pyramid, shown below, based on that full set of six triggers.

[future — show pyramid here]

The Alignment Pyramid Is Useful In Multiple Settings

I started to actually use that basic six-factor alignment motivation trigger pyramid as a very intentional tool kit for bringing people together in various settings as a group back in the early 1990's.

I used the pyramid to guide my own strategic and tactical thinking relative to bringing people together and getting people aligned in both my work places and in the various associations and community groups that I chaired or steered.

The formal work organization that I led back in the 1990s had multiple layers. We had dozens of care sites, multiple sets of caregivers, several unions, and a wide range of professional groups and work teams who all benefited from being aligned.

The entire alignment trigger pyramid turned out to be very functionally relevant to that organization — beginning with danger.

When I wanted to bring people in my own work settings and in various industry trade association settings together, I knew that triggering a sense of collective danger would be a useful thing to do. Creating a sense of collective danger and risk can be a very powerful group alignment motivation trigger.

Our personal survival instincts can actually be a part of the instinct package that is activated when danger is relevant to any setting or situation.

I also tended to create a sense in each of those settings that there was a common enemy that needed to be responded to in an aligned way. Having a common enemy is a great alignment trigger. There is a reason why the phrase — “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” — has survived for so long. It survives because it is often true.

The common enemy trigger needs to be believed by the people in a setting to be real — but the danger from that enemy doesn't need to be immediate for the trigger to work.

I have actually used the common enemy motivator a number of times to help bring people together. In a work setting, the common enemy can be the competitors who want to steal our patients or take our customers away.

I have used the names of CEO's from competing organizations to personify our common enemy and I have said things to our people like — “Harold wants to steal our patients. He wants to weaken us as an organization. We need to perform at such a high level that Harold cannot defeat us and Harold cannot steal what is ours.”

When that threat from Harold is perceived to be real, the common enemy trigger can help people inside the organization who have their own internal division points in place set their own prior internal division points aside in favor of a common internal effort to defeat Harold.

I know that strategy can work because I have used it and it did, in fact, work.

People Need To Perceive Triggers To Be Real

One of the things that I learned early in the process about each of the alignment triggers is that each of the six triggers works best when people both understand the trigger to be real and believe it to be real at a significant level.

Theoretical, rhetorical, or hypothetical threats are significantly less motivating and significantly less effective for triggering danger-based group alignment responses than real and valid threats.

Too many leaders invoke dangers for groups or promise collective gains for groups that are not believed or not perceived by group members to be both real and true.

When that lack of belief about a motivation trigger happens, the credibility of the leader can be undermined and cynicism can result.

Cynicism is not a good building block for high performance in any group or organizational setting.

Team Instincts Can Be Very Powerful

As I looked for other factors that I could use to create alignment, it was also clear to me very early in the process that we have very strong instincts to build and participate in teams. Our team instinct can be highly motivating for people when people are actually on a team.

People on teams tend to overlook multiple prior levels of differences in order to function as team members in the interest of the team.

Teams create their own loyalty and their own internal energy. Getting people to function on a team can get people who were not aligned before the team formation to have a very strong team alignment.

I did a lot of functional experimenting over those early years with the formation, structure, and use of teams. I learned that just calling people a team did not trigger team instincts.

Writing memos that said — “We are a team” — did not, I learned, tend to cause people to believe we are a team and did not cause people to act in any team ways.

Over time, after extensive experimentation, I put together a set of working guidelines for how to get people to function as a team with their team instincts fully activated.

Teams Need Identity, Purpose, And Leadership

For people to function as a team, I learned that it is a very good thing to have a clear team identity.

You also need the team to have a purpose and a defined set of members. People need to know who is on the team.

People in a team very much need to have something team-like to do in order to get team energies flowing.

Defeating another team is one of the easiest to invoke motivators to trigger team instincts. Accomplishing a specific targeted task is another easy team level motivator. The actual team task to be done needs to be clear to the team members in order to achieve its maximum alignment function and to have a meaningful motivation impact on the team thought processes and belief systems.

Team identity is a very useful tool. Team names help. “We are the Apex team” gives people a label to use to create context for their efforts.

Both Hunter Teams And Gatherer Teams Need Leaders

Teams need leaders. There are two basic kinds of team leaders, I discovered. Each type of leader has its role and use.

I figured out very early in the process of studying instincts for group activities that we have instincts to function as hunters and we have instincts to function as gatherers. Both hunter instincts and gatherer instincts can be very relevant to getting things done in any community or work setting.

Those sets of instincts are both explained in more detail in the *Primal Pathways* book. The processes of hunting and gathering are different in many ways, but I learned as I looked at those issues, it is clear that we use teams and we use leaders for both processes.

The team leaders for the hunter/war party processes tend to be directive, alpha leaders who have clear command authority and clear control roles on their team. Captains of one kind or another can fill that role for that hunter/warrior model.

We have team captains, ship captains, and various unit captains for our highly task focused hunter-model work teams.

Killing a deer or killing an elephant, in primal days, often involved a hunt leader who made the key decisions for the hunt and who functioned as the captain of the hunt.

For the gatherer teams, by contrast, the management style that works best and that has the highest level of success is for the leader to be much more collaborative and inclusive.

Gatherer teams tend to work together to figure out what needs to be done and who needs to do it. Gatherer teams do collective work and team members tend to reinforce each other in their work — with a leader who facilitates, guides, and even structures the process, but who is not the explicit chain of command captain and Alpha decision maker for each step and part of the process.

Our \$4 Billion Project Had A Gatherer Leader

I have seen in my work place operational settings that both styles work well for specific functions. When I put an electronic medical record system in place that was a complex \$4 billion project involving literally thousands of people and including hundreds of separate care sites, I had that project led by a woman who was the master of a collaborative approach to leading.

She began her leadership role for that huge project by assembling more than 100 of our senior medical leaders from across the country to do what the group called “A Collaborative Build.”

That collaborative build process actually cost many millions of dollars.

Some people were critical of that particular cost. But that collaborative build process was invaluable for both getting the input and the wisdom from all of those very intelligent leaders, and for figuring out what the key steps of that incredibly complex and massive process actually needed to be.

I do believe and know there are many times when we are much smarter collectively than we are individually smart. That was true in this case.

There Were Teams At Every Rollout Site

That whole relevant rollout process for that massive system was anchored in teams. There were clear teams at every care site. There were teams at every work site. They each had their identity, knew their role, and they each had a clear sense of what they needed to do to win as a team to achieve their rollout goals.

All of those teams won. It was a massive project. The biggest systems project ever done anywhere in the world for any non-government entity was completed on schedule and it was done within very close range of its targeted budget.

The system, itself, has been a major functional success and it has provided extremely good care support tools for the caregivers that it serves.

That extreme usefulness and the functional high impact of the final system is also due in part to the collaborative process that was used to tee it up and to then make it happen.

A Hunter Leadership Style Could Have Crashed The Project

If that whole process and that massive system rollout had been done by a hunter/warrior leader — using commands from on high to tell people in

each and every care site what to do to implement the system — I believe that project would have crashed and failed.

The Government of Great Britain actually tried to do a very similar care support computer system project at that same time. They used the hunter-model chain of command central control model for their version of the medical record system rather than using the collaborative team based rollout model that we used.

Their project spent twice as much money as we spent and their effort did crash and burn. They spent nearly 10 billion pounds on that project by the time they were done. They wrote most of it off. It was sad to see.

We had advised them to use our more collaborative up-front process, but there were some key people leading that effort who felt more comfortable telling people what to do rather than getting people's help in figuring out what needed to be done.

Their leaders needed to be obeyed rather than followed. That was a very expensive need.

Unit Based Teams At Care Sites Also Improved Performance

And Morale

As part of our extensive and clear commitment to teams, we also created multiple unit-based teams for almost all of our care sites. We had people in each site working as teams to collectively improve service and improve care quality.

The unit-based teams in each care site focused their team efforts on a “value compass” that was explicitly and deliberately built into our labor union partnership contracts. The value compass and its core goals set a clear context for the unit teams.

The unit-based teams we put in place across a wide range of settings had both higher care quality and higher staff morale scores than the units that were not functioning explicitly as teams.

Over 100,000 front-line workers were included in those unit-based teams on the day I retired from that particular CEO job. Their success levels set standards for both care delivery and patient service.

I knew from direct personal experience in multiple sites and settings that teams can do excellent work — and I knew from that same experience base and I knew from direct observation in many other relevant settings that people on teams tend to feel good about being on teams — particularly when they succeed as teams.

Those efforts to function as teams for care delivery were also explained in more detail in the *Primal Pathways* book and in the *KP Inside* book that I wrote a couple of years ago.

In any case — as I was putting together my list of group alignment triggers back in the early 1990s, I put team instincts at the third rung of the pyramid because team instincts can obviously bring people together in ways that cause other differences to be set aside in favor of alignment in any setting.

Team instincts are also on my useful tool list from an executive perspective because the team model can create great performance outcomes in work settings when it is well done and when it is focused on the right issues and the right processes.

People Like To Be “Us”

The next step on the alignment trigger pyramid is to create a sense of “us.”

Getting people aligned is also clearly easier, I learned very early, when people in any setting have a reason to perceive the group they are in to be an “us.” This book has discussed those issues of being an “us” at length.

As I worked on the initial drafts of the alignment trigger pyramid, it was obvious that one of the key triggers at the heart of the pyramid needed to be to create a sense of “us” for the people we want to be aligned in any setting.

I knew from experience that when people have a sense of being “us,” people tend to be supportive, cooperative, trusting, ethical, and to have a sense that their “us” is on their side in key ways.

I knew from both experience and observation that organizations with that level of internal identity and internal alignment as an “us” are much more likely to perform well. I have found that to be particularly true in health care settings, but I have seen it to be true in a number of other settings as well.

The good news about creating a sense of “us” in any setting is that we have very flexible and positive instinctive reactions relative to seeing ourselves and perceiving ourselves to be an “us.” We tend to react in positive ways for almost every category of us. That is very useful, because there are actually many ways to be an “us.” We can be an “us” based on our family, clan, tribe, culture, ethnic group, race, nation, belief system, or religion.

We functionally invent many categories of us in various settings. When any of those categories of “us” have relevance to people’s lives, they can trigger the right set of positive instincts for the people who feel that sense of “us.”

Labor unions can create a sense of “us.” Being the citizens of a city can trigger a sense of “us.” Religions can create a sense of “us.” Being fans of the same athletic team can even trigger a sense of “us.”

As individual people, we tend to feel comfort and even safety in any setting where we have a perceived reason to feel that we are part of an “us.” It feels good to be an “us.”

I have discovered that we can trigger, activate, and support us-related behaviors and us-related roles in any context where people feel like an “us.”

These can be very good roles to invoke. Academic settings can create a sense of “us.” Professional certification often creates a sense of “us” for the people who receive the certification.

Academic settings can also create bitter us/them wars when people in the setting perceive other people to be a “Them.”

We need to avoid having people in any setting to be perceived as “Them.”

The key to remember is that alignment as an “us” causes people who feel that alignment to act in positive ways relative to other people who share that alignment. Acting in positive ways with other people is a very useful function of that perception... and it is good to know what triggers exist to create that perception.

The right sets of instincts and instinctive thought processes, behaviors, and emotions are triggered whenever we perceive that the group we are in functions in a meaningful way as an “us” and when we believe the group allows us to safely activate our “us” related instincts.

We Are The People Of Kaiser Permanente

A major goal for me in each of my own leadership settings has been to very explicitly generate a sense of “us” for each setting.

Both Health Partners and Kaiser Permanente are direct care systems with related health plan based revenue streams. HP has roughly 10,000 employees and KP has nearly 200,000 employees. Most employees in both settings deliver care.

Both settings have multiple professional groups, multiple unions, and multiple geographic and site related internal alignments. Each of those internal subgroupings in each of those organizations has the clear potential

to split-off and to create its own separate sense of “us” for that portion of the group.

When internal groups split off in any setting and became their own separate “us,” it significantly creates a very real and negative risk that the divided “us” will identify someone else in their setting to be “Them.”

It can operationally be dangerous, damaging, and very dysfunctional when people in any setting have an internal perception that someone else in that setting is actually a “them.”

Behaviors relative to a “Them” in any setting can be dysfunctional, dangerous, and ugly. I have learned from several painful experiences and from close observations in multiple other settings that it is very important to work very hard to avoid having any internal people in the settings we are part of to be perceived as “Them.”

I saw some extremely dysfunctional post-merger behaviors in my first major employer that caused damage to both people and to organizational performance.

In each setting where I have been the CEO, I have spent time helping create a sense that we were us.

I called us “The People of Kaiser Permanente” or “The People of Health Partners. I spent time communicating to our staff that the fact we were an “us” in each setting meant that we had shared values, shared beliefs, and a common reason to support one another in achieving our shared and collective mission of serving our patients.

The book *KP Inside* is a book of letters that I wrote to all 200,000 of our KP caregivers and staff members every single week for five years. Those letters were written in part to help create a sense of who we are as the People of Kaiser Permanente.

If you read that book, you can see easily what I was trying to do with those communications. Those letters explained clearly to our people why it was a very good thing for us to be that “us” in that setting.

Trade Associations Can Also Become “Us”

I have also used that same set of triggers in my various roles as trade association chair, commission chair, coalition chair, and task force organizer or chair.

I have chaired multiple kinds of organizations. One of the things I have done in each of those multi-group, multi-organizational settings was to work very intentionally to create a sense of “us” for that group.

In leading a couple of trade associations, I spent time in a very direct way creating a sense that even though we were all competitors at one level, when we were all inside of our trade association and when we were functioning together in our trade association context, we needed to be an “us” — focused on the issues we had in common and not on our differences.

As chair of half a dozen health care improvement organizations and coalitions, I have used similar messages calling for us to function as an “us” in the context of each organizations mission.

I have often used the common enemy alignment trigger and the danger alignment trigger to get people in each of the trade association to function in an aligned way — rather than being competitors at war with one another.

Those triggers have all worked fairly well in each of those settings. I learned from multiple experiences that it is impossible to be too simplistic or too clear in making those points in those kinds of settings.

So creating a sense of “us” is high on the group alignment trigger pyramid and I have used it with some success in a wide range of settings.

I know from seeing other organizations sad and damaging experiences that if you can’t create an overall sense of “us” for all people in some of

those settings, then the normal alignments that people will feel to other definitions of “us” can create very dysfunctional and even damaging behaviors inside those settings.

Common Gain Is Also Unifying

The trigger level that is one step higher than creating a sense of us on the alignment pyramid is to have a common sense of gain — to have a sense that we will all do well in some important way if we all work together in an aligned way.

People, I found, will work together if there is a sense and a belief that everyone will benefit in some real way by working together.

There are intangible benefits that can motivate people, and there are tangible collective gains that can motivate people.

Money, in some form, often works to trigger the common gain alignment motivation.

If people in a setting believe they will benefit financially from being aligned in either the short term or the long term, then alignment is likely to happen in those settings.

Other collective benefits can also bring people together. Having a safe and good place to live can create a sense of alignment. Having a safe and good retirement plan can trigger a sense of alignment.

When looking for motivation tools that can create alignment, looking for things that people want and linking those things that people want to alignment can be a successful approach for triggering alignment.

On some early versions of the pyramid, I labeled that particular trigger “gain/greed.”

The point of that particular trigger is that we can trigger alignment in some settings if people perceive and believe that they will directly benefit from the alignment. If we have a sense that we will all gain financially from being aligned, then being aligned can be a good thing to do.

Inside organizations, there are multiple ways of creating a sense of common gain. *The Art of InterGroup Peace* book explains some of those strategies in more detail.

Mission And Vision Top The Pyramid

The top level on the alignment trigger pyramid is mission and vision. It was clear to me very early that we can often get people and groups of

people into alignment by persuading people to work together to achieve a shared mission and a shared vision.

A clear and compelling mission can bring some people together who can't be brought into alignment with any other motivation triggers.

I have used that very explicit group vision and mission approach with each of the health care organizations that I have led with some success. People in health care can become aligned with significant success around the goals of delivering great care or around the mission of meeting patients' care needs particularly well.

People in care-related professions have a natural leaning toward service-related shared missions — and a clear sense of vision and mission in those areas can often be aligning and motivating for the people in those settings.

We focused on continuously improving, data supported, patient-focused team care at Kaiser Permanente and our caregivers aligned with continuous improvement as both a commitment and a skill set that was focused on delivering top quality care.

That particular alignment motivation level is most likely to work well when it is aligned in various ways with other levels of the pyramid.

If we feel that our mission also helps us defeat a common enemy and if we believe our mission helps us function safely as an “us,” and if we feel that our mission can cause us or our group to prosper — than the pyramid is even more useful as a package rather than just having people whose alignment is triggered by any of the individual pieces.

Hitler Used The Whole Pyramid

As I was building the alignment pyramid and testing its use, I looked directly for historical support and evidence for those specific factors. I was both horrified and reinforced to figure out that Adolf Hitler actually used all of the steps on that pyramid to gain and keep power in Germany. He used every trigger very explicitly and he used every trigger very well.

He started with danger. Adolf Hitler invoked a clear sense of the danger that was faced by the German people.

He clearly utilized the common enemy approach — directing group hatred against the Jews of Germany in a very concentrated way.

He also invoked team instincts with team members, team displays, and defined groups like the Gestapo who had both a team mission and a team identity.

He worked hard to create a sense of “us” for Germany. He invented an Aryan Race to invest his “us” identity in — and he called his “us” the master race. For many Germans, being the “master race” was a particularly seductive definition of “us.”

He also triggered the group gain/group greed motivation level by promising the Germans that they would own and rule the world.

His mission/vision piece was also very explicit. He wrote Mein Kampf and he did an extensive series of speeches and put in place multiple other communication efforts that extended and promoted the mission and the vision of being a Nazi.

That book and those lectures, speeches, and propaganda campaigns about mission and vision would have had much less impact on the German people, however, if he had not also skillfully triggered, linked, and coordinated all of the other five explicit steps on the alignment pyramid.

The Pyramid Can Be Used For Good Or Evil

The Group Alignment Trigger Pyramid — like all of our instinct-related behaviors — can be used for good or it can be used for evil. It can be used for war or it can be used for Peace.

It is a powerful tool. When I realized how powerful that tool kit was and when I realized that evil people could use those triggers to do evil things, then I had to stop the writing process to think through whether or not to share that alignment triggering tool kit with the world.

I did not want to make evil people better at being evil. That can easily happen. A couple of people who read early drafts of those books told me they had that very explicit fear about giving evil people better tool kits after reading those books.

That was a sobering thought. It gave me pause.

I concluded, after fairly deep consideration, that the people who do evil things already tend to use those basic triggers — either instinctively or because they have developed their own science and their own instinct-linked tool kit on those issues.

I concluded, however, that the people in the world who are not evil will be better served when all of those instinct-related tools are more clearly understood and when we each understand how instincts affect our lives and how those specific sets of triggers can create functional levels of alignment.

My hope is that when evil people do use those tools to do evil things, then intelligent and fully informed people will recognize those tools for what they are and will be better able to resist them.

We will, I believe, all be much better off at several levels if we understand what those tools are and we will be better off when we collectively choose to use all of these tools for Peace.

Chapter Nineteen of this book and *The Art of InterGroup Peace* book both explain how that can be done.

Those Tools Have Worked Well In My CEO Settings

As the CEO of the organizations I have led, I have used those alignment triggers at multiple levels.

I have helped people internally appreciate the dangers we face. I have identified, named, labeled, and pointed clearly to our various external common enemies. In the settings where I have been CEO, we know who to fear and we know why we should fear them.

I have identified a sense of us in each setting — with people in my worksites most recently being either the People of Kaiser Permanente or the People of Health Partners.

I have identified to the people in each setting the various ways we will all benefit from being mutually supportive with one another.

And I have very carefully and clearly identified, supported, publicized, and communicated a mission and a vision in each setting that was set up for us all to use as a guide and, hopefully, as an inspiration and a motivator.

My various health care reform books have all been a very intentional part of that vision-building tool kit. I learned years ago it is sometimes more effective and easier to make a key point to the people I work with in a book than it is to make that same key point about a core belief or point of view in a memo or a speech.

Having a Mission Of Helping People Can Be Aligning

The mission trigger has been a fascinating and very useful tool.

For some people, the most important thing in their life is their belief system or their sense of purpose.

In both of my last organizations, we had a mission to deliver great, patient centered health care and we had a mission to deliver great care in a continuously improving, data supported way. That mission is a very

motivating mission for a health care organization and for health care workers.

It was particularly motivating in those settings because people who voluntarily choose the health care professions for their life's work tend to be people who very much want to help other people. That's why people become nurses or therapists or physicians. People who choose those jobs want to help people.

So having a group mission of helping people can be motivating and that mission can help create a shared sense of "us." That mission also helped us recruit caregivers of every type and category of caregiver relatively easily to a number of key jobs.

We also used that mission to attract people to our computer teams in those healthcare work settings who felt right and who were directly motivated by the fact that we were using our computers very directly and explicitly to help make care better.

We clearly used our computers very extensively in both organizations to support care and to make care delivery better. Our computer teams loved that use of their computer-related talent to make care better and the

computer teams felt, appropriately, that their IT teams were key parts of our care teams.

I heard the same feedback dozens of times from our computer people — “We love being key members of the care team,” they said. “We feel like we are saving lives when we make that patient information available to the caregivers.”

They were, in fact, both right and accurate. Those computer support teams did make information available to caregivers that saved lives.

I believe those computer support teams did their work better in those settings because we were clear about the full implications of what those teams were doing and we were clear about how their tools were used.

Mission can be a very powerful and useful motivator. It helps people in a setting to have a collective identity as the people who believe in that mission.

Leaders Function As The Mission Focus In Some Settings

I was confused for several years — through most of the 1990s, in fact — about why some organizations seemed to function as though they had strong level of mission alignment and as if they had a common purpose, but

I could not see that those organizations actually had either a clear mission or a clear purpose.

Then I realized that the leaders of some organizations personally fill that mission spot and role on the motivation pyramid for their organizations. Some organizations function with a very strong sense of personal loyalty to their Alpha leader as their key functional and motivating mission that give directions and even purpose to many of the people in the organization.

In a number of settings, the unifying sense of collective purpose that is generated for the group is to follow a charismatic leader for the group and to support that leader in loyal ways.

Following a leader, I began to understand, also is a common and clearly instinct-guided behavior pattern. It can feel very good for people to follow a leader in a deeply personal and loyal way.

Having the leader in any setting fill the hierarchical function of mission on that alignment and motivation pyramid is often the primary and long-standing reality for those settings where the culture, itself, creates hereditary leaders.

History gives us many examples of loyalty to hereditary leaders. People often feel deep loyalty to kings. Kings tend to both expect and receive loyalty.

Hereditary leaders create their own functional paradigm of what constitutes a working mission for a group. It can feel very right to people in those cultures who have hereditary leaders to feel great loyalty to their hereditary leader and to act accordingly.

Some people can even feel very right prioritizing their own lives to have loyalty to their king or to their chief as their own primary reason to exist and as their own main reason to function.

That is not the model I prefer to set up in settings where I have been able to set up the alignment motivators, but I can see why people use that leader centered approach and I can see that it does work much of the time.

Servant Leaders Can Help Achieve Missions

In quite a few settings, loyalty to a gang leader or to a cult leader fills the spot where other organizations place mission on the alignment hierarchy pyramid.

The highest step in the group alignment pyramid in both gangs and cults is generally centered very directly on that Alpha leader loyalty factor for the cult or gang leader.

I personally prefer the model for my own organizations and for my own communities where a clearly stated mission is the pyramid focus point for the group and where all of the leaders in that setting are servant leaders who do their personal alpha functions well and explicitly in the interest of being a servant leader and of being a lead keeper of the shared mission.

I prefer the model where people are loyal to the organization and not to the leader of the organization. I believe that it can improve organizational success levels in many settings at multiple levels when the leaders in that setting see themselves as servant leaders — and act accordingly.

If an organization uses an overall gatherer leadership style and has both a clear mission and clear value-linked elements of their culture, then the leaders of every subunit in the organization have the ability to thrive and to flourish in making the overall goals of the organization a success.

Creativity tends to be less likely to happen in strictly hierarchical situations. Also, when the leader of an organization is personally the organization's key goal and top priority, then the organization is functionally

less likely to continuously improve in doing what it does. If continuous improvement is the goal, existing to serve a leader is less likely to help a setting achieve that goal.

Both models and approaches are functionally solid at an instinctive level. Both models fill the pyramid peak for group alignment triggers with a workable focus factor — either a mission or a leader.

We Need To Make All Six Alignment Triggers Work For Peace

What I have seen to be true in multiple settings is that we always need to have the top of the pyramid alignment pyramid filled in some way that feels right to the relevant group. We instinctively need the top of the alignment pyramid filled and we instinctively need our group leadership hierarchies filled as well.

Those are very instinctive behaviors.

It has been fascinating and rewarding to work in a wide range of settings and to figure out both what alignment triggers exist and how to use them most effectively in each setting.

We need to use the entire set of alignment triggers to create a culture of Peace and inclusion for America. We need to use those triggers in each

and every setting, and we need to use them broadly to steer us all to a future of collective alignment.

Once we understand each trigger, they are much easier to use. We need to be accountable to make sure those triggers are used to bring us together and not to drive us apart.