You thought everything was under control. It was a big project, lots of moving parts, and visibility throughout the organization. You had a detailed plan, and you and your employees attended team building. Everyone started out with enthusiasm and energy. The project had a short timeline, but you were sure you and your team could meet the deadline. The work seemed to be going smoothly and then, one by one, things started happening. And now here you are five weeks past the date that you promised you would finish, 15 percent over budget, some team members aren't speaking, and everyone is blaming you. What went wrong?

Well it is probably much more than you. Formal leaders are indeed important, but you need to examine the whole system. According to Cynthia McCauley and Lynn Fick-Cooper, leadership is a dynamic process, and when it is effective it generates three outcomes: direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC).

*Direction* is agreement in the group about what they intend to accomplish.
*Alignment* is coordinated work in the group with strong alignments.
*Commitment* is the trust and mutual responsibility for the success and well-being of the group.

Here are clues when things are not going as planned.

- Direction is weak; members are uncertain about results and feel pulled in different directions by competing goals.
- Alignment is weak; members work in isolation and are uncertain about how their tasks fit into the larger picture and goal.
- Commitment is weak; members put their own interests ahead of the group and contribute only when it is easy.

Did your project experience any of these behaviors? The DAC model works as a system, and even though you may be able to pinpoint one area over another, you will want to examine the entire process.