

# *Leading Through* Change

*Delivering today while building tomorrow*



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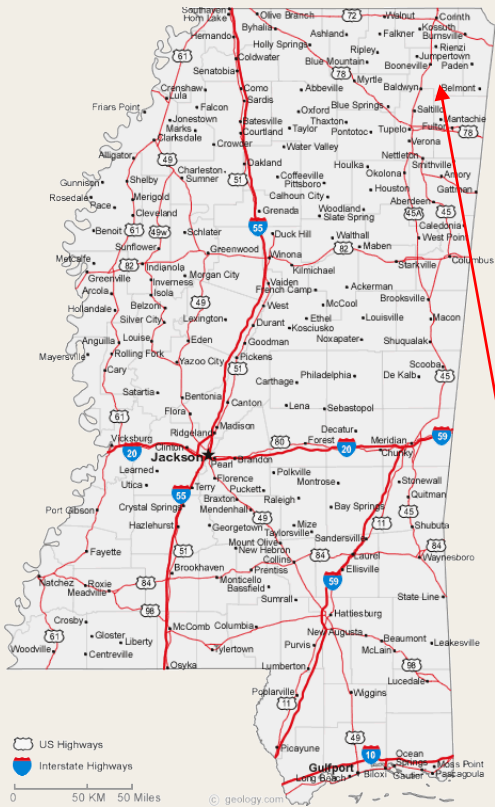
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WHO IS THIS GUY?

# My Story



**Booneville, MS**

- The population is 9,246
- 20% have college degrees
- The poverty rate is 15%

**I have been the CEO in the chair. Now I help select, prepare, and coach the people who sit in it.**

*So this is a peer conversation.*

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**3**

**PE-BACKED COMPANIES  
FOUNDED, SCALED AND  
SOLD**

**15**

**YEARS OF EXECUTIVE  
COACHING AND ADVISING  
PE-BACKED CEOS**

**2011**

**BEGAN SERVING ON  
BOARDS FOR PRIVATE  
EQUITY FIRMS**

**22**

**YEARS TEACHING AT  
VANDERBILT'S OWEN GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

12 CEOs. One question framed most every answer.



*How to successfully lead an organization through a period of significant change when the business has structural constraints around talent, capacity and profitability.*

# Five forces impacting your business all at once

- |           |                                                                                                                  |                  |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>01</b> | <b>Industry uncertainty</b><br>Regulation, pricing, and competition shift faster than the annual plan.           | <b>MARKET</b>    |
| <b>02</b> | <b>Economic whiplash</b><br>Inflation, rates, and cost swings. The planning cycle cannot keep up.                | <b>FINANCIAL</b> |
| <b>03</b> | <b>Cultural and generational change</b><br>Five generations at work, new expectations, and a widening trust gap. | <b>SOCIAL</b>    |
| <b>04</b> | <b>AI rewriting roles</b><br>Work is changing faster than job descriptions can keep up.                          | <b>TECHNICAL</b> |
| <b>05</b> | <b>Global instability</b><br>Conflict, supply shocks, political whiplash. The noise never quiets.                | <b>EXTERNAL</b>  |

*Any one of these is manageable. All five together break the old ways of leading change.*

The real question is not whether a company  
can grow.

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*It is whether it can grow without making the organization heavier,  
slower, and margin compressed.*

# 01

## PART ONE · VALUE

# What earns a premium multiple?

*Where the multiple comes from, and what buyers pay for*

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Buyers pay for **proof**. Not promises.

# Where the multiple comes from

$$\text{Exit value} = \text{Earnings} \times \text{Multiple} - \text{Capital}$$

Exit value is earnings times the multiple a buyer will pay, net of the capital it took.

## 01 · EARNINGS

### Grow the earnings

Organic growth plus accretive acquisitions. Organic is the growth buyers trust most, because it proves the model works.

## 02 · MULTIPLE

### Earn a higher multiple

Each business here and each Add-On were bought at a given EBITDA multiple.. A better exit multiple requires same-store improvement in EBITDA and demonstrated staying power.

## 03 · CAPITAL

### Spend capital wisely

Every dollar invested must come back as EBITDA. Corporate cost should grow only as fast as the earnings it supports.

## 01 · WHAT BUYERS DILIGENCE

# What buyers pay a premium for

Six things a buyer will test. Each one takes years to prove.



### Organic growth

Proof we can grow what we buy, not only buy more of it.



### Retained revenue

Clients who stay. A known lifetime value against a known acquisition cost.



### A leadership bench

A team that runs the business day to day, beyond any one person.



### Process consistency

Best practices are documented and consistently followed.



### Clean systems

One source of truth. Reliable data. A tech foundation that scales.



### Integration that works

Acquisitions that perform better after they join than before.

*None of these can be built **in the last six months.***

# The buyer's diligence

A buyer will test six things. Score your company before they do.

1

## Score

Rate each premium driver red, yellow or green for your company today.

2

## Play the buyer

In pairs, your partner asks the hardest question about your best "green."

3

## Find the pattern

Which driver is red most often with the portco leaders around your table?

4

## Commit

What is one action this quarter that turns a yellow into green.

### SCORE IT THE WAY A BUYER WOULD

|                           | Red                   | Yellow                | Green                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 01 Organic growth         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 02 Retained revenue       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 03 A leadership bench     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 04 Process consistency    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 05 Clean systems          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 06 Integration that works | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**DEBRIEF:** Which of the six would be hardest to prove if a buyer arrived in twelve months?

## THE PATH TO VALUE CREATION

# Building a high-value business

Every phase earns the right to the next one.

### PHASE 01

## Prove it

### THE ENGINE

Can this business reliably create customer value and make money?

**Evidence-backed viability** →

### PHASE 02

## Build it

### THE MACHINE

Can it grow without losing quality, cash, control, or culture?

**Controlled repeatability** →

### PHASE 03

## Scale it

### THE ENTERPRISE

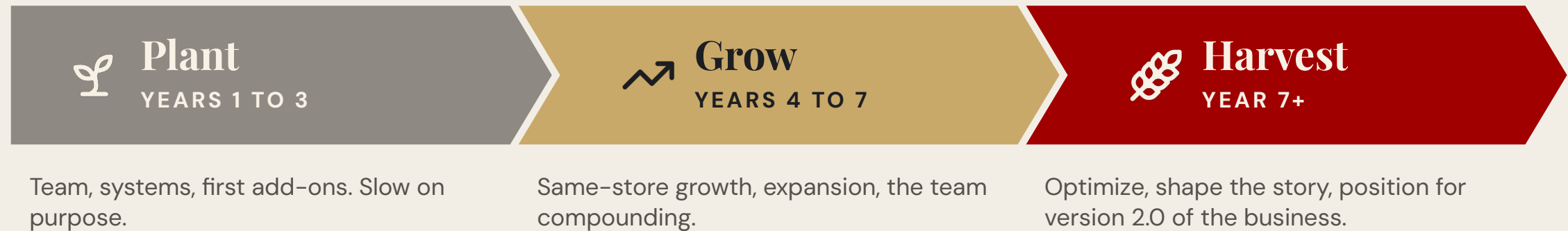
Can it scale and endure without depending on 2-3 key people?

**Transferable enterprise value**

## THE PE CLOCK

# The clock forces the choice

The hold period by phases to deliver a premium exit.



*The clock doesn't let you do everything.  
It forces you to choose the growth initiatives  
that compound inside the window.*

### THE SAME 2.5X EXIT NOW TAKES

Last cycle  ~5% EBITDA growth

This cycle  **8 to 10%**

Buyers pay for provable, repeatable improvement.

# Clock check

Where you are on the hold clock, and where is your business on the path to value.

1

## Mark both

Your year on the clock, and your honest phase on the path.

2

## Name the gap

If the clock is ahead of the business, what is missing?

3

## Trade advice

Each CEO gets one suggestion from the table.

### MARK WHERE YOU ARE TODAY

#### ON THE CLOCK



#### ON THE PATH



**Gap: what must be true by harvest that is not true today?**

## THE FRAMEWORK FOR TODAY'S CONVERSATION

# Diagnose. Choose. Align. Engage. Equip. Lead.

Six steps for leading change when you are already carrying the weight of today.



# 02

## PART TWO · THE SITUATION

# Why the old playbook stopped working

*What sustained pressure does to smart, capable decision-makers*

---

The instinct is **self-protection**.

## THE OLD PLAYBOOK

# Why the old playbook no longer works

Most of us were trained to lead in a world that no longer exists.

### THE OLD WORLD

## Predict. Plan. Execute.

- The plan was the strategy. Follow it.
- Stability was the norm.
- Information was scarce.
- Authority held the answers.

---

*A good plan survived the whole year.*

### THE NEW WORLD

## Sense. Decide. Adjust.

- Strategy is a rhythm.
- Disruption and constant change are the norm.
- Information is infinite and easy to access.
- Judgment and attention are scarce.

---

*Plans expire in weeks. Principles do not.*

# Do you hear these phrases in your building?

As you grow, everything moves slower, heavier, and more dependent on you personally.

*"There aren't enough hours in the day."*

*"Nobody knows exactly who owns what."*

*"We spend most of our time firefighting."*

*"Plans get made, but nothing happens."*

*"Sales are growing, earnings are stalled."*

*"If 3 key people left, I'd be in real trouble."*

## FROM YOUR SURVEY

*"We're doing more with the same people."*

# 87%

of growth stalls trace to internal causes: choices about people, systems, and focus. Only 13% come from the market or the economy.

*None of these are effort problems. **Each one is a change that has not been fully led yet.***

## THE SITUATION

# What pressure does to decision-makers

In uncertainty, leaders reach for instincts that make things worse. **Most of us have done every item on the left.**

## WHAT WE REACH FOR

## WHAT IT COSTS US

|                                                  |   |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Waiting for complete information before deciding | ➔ | <b>Decisions delayed until events make them for us</b> |
| Tightening control and pulling decisions upward  | ➔ | <b>Teams that stop thinking and start waiting</b>      |
| Projecting confidence we do not actually feel    | ➔ | <b>Trust that collapses when reality leaks through</b> |
| Adding more meetings, more data, more consensus  | ➔ | <b>Motion replacing progress. Busy going nowhere</b>   |
| Working harder to outrun the anxiety             | ➔ | <b>Exhaustion wearing the costume of commitment</b>    |

*The price is paid by the people who follow us – through burnout.*

# 03

## PART THREE · DIAGNOSE

# Can you scale a business, or just maintain one?

*The leadership demands of high growth*

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The same seat becomes **a different job.**

## THE CHANGE INSIDE EVERY VALUE CREATION PLAN

# Growth to scale is a change, not a project

One column describes your company today. Getting to the other one is a people change.

### THIS IS GROWTH

- More revenue and more cost, moving together
- Runs on effort, people, and hours
- The CEO is the hub
- Works because of who does the work
- Measured in revenue

### THIS IS SCALE

- More revenue, less added cost. Margins improve
- Runs on systems and design
- The CEO is the architect
- Works no matter who does the work
- Measured in leverage

*The market will not reward you for getting bigger. **It rewards you for getting better at getting bigger.***

# Growing or scaling?

Place your company between the two columns. Then name what breaks first.

1

## Place it

Mark each row from growth (left) to scale (right).

2

## Stress test

If revenue doubled in 18 months, what would break first?

3

## Share and sort

Is it decision rights, process, data, technology or talent?

4

## Name the fix

The one design change that would hold at double the volume.

### WHERE DOES YOUR COMPANY SIT TODAY?

#### GROWTH

#### SCALE

More revenue, more cost



Margins improve

Runs on effort and hours



Runs on systems

The CEO is the hub



The CEO is the architect

Works because of who



Works no matter who

Measured in revenue



Measured in leverage

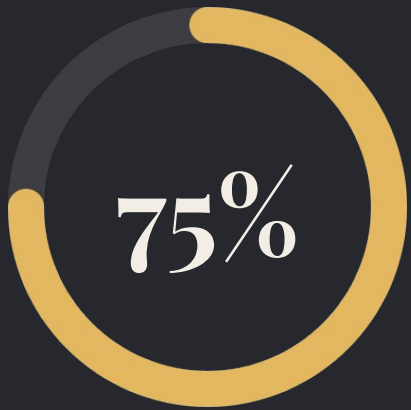
If revenue doubled in 18 months, what breaks first? \_\_\_\_\_

**DEBRIEF:** Which "first thing to break" came up most often at your table?

THE RESEARCH IS CLEAR

# The stall comes from inside the company

A 50-year study of roughly 600 of the largest successful companies on record.



**of companies hit a stall.**

Nearly every company that reaches meaningful growth hits at least one serious stall.



**of the causes are internal.**

Management choices about people, systems, and focus. Only 13% link to markets, regulation, or the economy.

*Bain independently validated the findings: **87% of the barriers to growth are internal.***

## WHAT SCALE REQUIRES

# The operating system of scale

Scale is an operating system, not a strategy. Miss these and growth creates friction faster than value.



### Clear decision rights

Choices made close to the work, inside known guardrails, without queuing to the top.



### Standardized processes

Less variation, so quality stops depending on who does the work.



### Clean data, shared definitions

One version of the numbers, visible fast enough to act on.



### Technology and systems

Tools that remove manual work, so people solve problems instead of moving information.

## AND WHAT MAKES IT MOVE

- Data visibility and KPI discipline: a focused set of enterprise metrics.
- A management cadence that drives accountability, week after week.
- Performance variation surfaced fast enough to act inside the quarter.
- Consistent, reliable communication from the top throughout the organization.

*Without these, the only way to solve process problems by adding people. **That destroys operating leverage.***

## WHAT BREAKS

# When expansion outruns the operating model

The company grows. The operating model does not keep up. Speed, visibility, then margin go next.

- 01** Workarounds become the norm, and exceptions become standard practice.
- 02** Meetings replace systems. Managers add approvals instead of clarity.
- 03** Leaders spend more time coordinating than improving – working in the business, not on the business.
- 04** Margin starts to leak, and with it the earnings–quality story behind your valuation.

### THE PATTERN:

*When growth becomes a tax on margin instead of a source of leverage, that is the moment to redesign, not to hire.*

## THE MAP

# What got you here won't get you there

Scale does not break once. It breaks in sequence, and every fix reveals the next thing that isn't ready.

**\$1 TO 15M EBITDA**

Stage 1

### Operational systems

Hustle, relationships and team GRIT win. The systems that matter sell, deliver and collect the cash.

**\$15 TO 30M EBITDA**

Stage 2

### Management systems

Planning, structure, controls and decision rights. Intensity stops scaling here. Design must take over.

**\$30M+ EBITDA**

Stage 3

### The bench accelerator

Culture and the bench deliver what systems built. Get stage two wrong and you never see stage three.

**The headcount version:** Strains at about 50 people, breaks at about 200. Past that, tribal knowledge must become explicit systems.

## THE SPEED LIMIT

# The company cannot outgrow its decision framework

If every important decision routes through a few people, scale is nearly impossible.

**01**

**Decision volume scales faster than headcount.**

Double the company and you more than double the decisions.

**02**

**Delay is a silent tax.**

A decision waits, a quote doesn't go out and the hire doesn't start.

**03**

**Most decision time is already wasted.**

61% of executives say much of it is used ineffectively.

**04**

**Waiting trains dependence.**

Teams stop deciding and start queuing.

## THE REAL SPEED LIMIT

**Get the wait out of the work.**

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The company can only move as fast as its most overloaded decider.

## THE PRESCRIPTION

# Decision architecture

Designed decision rights cost very little and pay immediately.

# 1

## Name who owns the decision

List your ten key recurring decisions. Write one name beside each. If it is the CEO most of the time, you found the barrier.

# 2

Green

Yellow

Red

## Build the Authority Matrix

Set thresholds by dollars, risk and reputation. Then delegate decisions, not just tasks.

# 3

## Adopt a decision model

Slow is not careful. It is expensive. Prompt deciders are more likely to decide well.

*"Operational excellence begins when the organization knows how to run **without asking you first.**"*

## TALENT

# Talent is a scaling system, not a hiring event

94%

of PE investors credit company leadership with roughly half of investment returns. **Few portfolio companies fund professional development for the team.** Close that gap.

~25%

of portfolio companies run succession programs. Succession depth across key functions **is the cheapest insurance nobody buys.**

Early

CEOs who sequence talent before the pain erupts earn greater returns. **Growth will outpace some leaders' capacity.**

## THE ACQUIRER TEST

*"If I were acquiring this company two years from now, would I trust this team to run it without me?"*

---

If you hesitate on anyone, you already know what to do. Map every N-1 seat against the next stage. **Track regrettable attrition like cash.**

# The acquirer test

"If I were acquiring this company two years from now, would I trust this team to run it without me?"

## 1 Map the seats

List your direct reports by initials. Answer the test for each.

## 2 Find the "not yet's"

For each, what would make it a yes within twelve months?

## 3 Share one

Share one "not yet" seat and your plan. No names.

### YOUR DIRECT REPORTS, AGAINST THE NEXT STAGE

| SEAT  | RUN IT WITHOUT ME?                 |                                        |                                   | WHAT MAKES IT A YES? |
|-------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |
| _____ | <input type="button" value="Yes"/> | <input type="button" value="Not yet"/> | <input type="button" value="No"/> | _____                |

### DEBRIEF

What do you owe your "not yet's" in the next 90 days: coaching, clarity, or a decision?

# 04

PART FOUR · CHOOSE

## What do you change now, and what waits?

*EBITDA now versus enterprise value later*

---

It demands **focus**.

## YOUR CHANGE BUDGET

# Every initiative draws on the same people

Your organization has a finite budget for change. Strategy decks never show it.

## YOUR TEAM'S CAPACITY



### Rocks first

Three to five per season.  
Everything else is sand. If you have more than five rocks, you have none.

### Simplify before you automate

Technology amplifies whatever you point it at. Point it at chaos and you get faster chaos.

### Capital follows clarity

So do your best people. Give them something clear to follow.

## THE DUAL MANDATE

# Both/and, not either/or

EBITDA now versus enterprise value later is a polarity to manage, not a problem to solve.



# What will you choose not to do?

---

*Anyone can tell you what they're going to grow. The leaders who scale can tell you what they won't do.*

# Stop. Fund. Protect.

Both/and in practice: deliver today, build tomorrow, and pay for it by stopping something.

- 1 Stop**  
Name one initiative you will stop or pause. Be specific.
- 2 Fund and protect**  
One rock you will fully resource. One future bet you will shield.
- 3 Pressure-test**  
The table asks each CEO: is that a real stop, or a "later" you will likely revisit?



**STOP**  
**One thing we stop**

Frees real capacity this quarter.

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**FUND**  
**One rock we fully resource**

People, time and budget.  
No half-measures.

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**PROTECT**  
**One future bet we protect**

Shielded from the urgent,  
reviewed quarterly.

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**DEBRIEF:** What made stopping the hardest call: the sunk cost, the people attached, or your own pride?

# 05

PART FIVE · ALIGN

## Aligning the team to adapt to change

*What never moves, and what can*

---

It demands **clarity**.

WHAT NEVER MOVES VERSUS WHAT IS ALLOWED TO

# Cast a lighthouse. There is no map.

In a storm, maps fail. People need a **fixed point that never moves**, and a route that is allowed to.

## THE FIXED POINT

### Never moves

- **The mission:** who we serve and why it matters.
- The values we will not trade for relief.
- How we treat people, especially under stress.
- The definition of winning that outlasts this quarter.

## THE FLEXIBLE ROUTE

### Allowed to move

- Tactics, timelines, and this quarter's plan.
- Org charts, reporting lines, and roles.
- Budgets, forecasts, and headcount.
- Tools, systems, vendors, and channels.

*When your team can see the lighthouse, they can survive almost any change of route.*

# Three questions that cut through the fog

Clarity rarely arrives as an answer. It arrives as a better question.

## 1 What is true in every scenario?

Strip the plan down to the moves that work in every version of the future. Do those first.

---

### WHAT TO DO

- List your top three scenarios.
- Find the common actions.
- Fund and start them now.

## 2 What breaks first if we are wrong?

Every strategy rests on a key assumption. Name it, watch it, and decide its failure trigger in advance.

---

### WHAT TO DO

- Share assumptions openly.
- Assign someone to watch weekly.
- Pre-agree trigger and response.

## 3 What would we do if we were unafraid?

Fear clouds judgment. This question separates real risk from imagined risk.

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### WHAT TO DO

- Say it out loud.
- Write both answers side by side.
- Ask what the fear protects.

## THE HARD TRUTH

# What we want to believe

### THE BELIEF

As leaders, we want to believe there is meaningful alignment in our business.

### THE ASSUMPTION

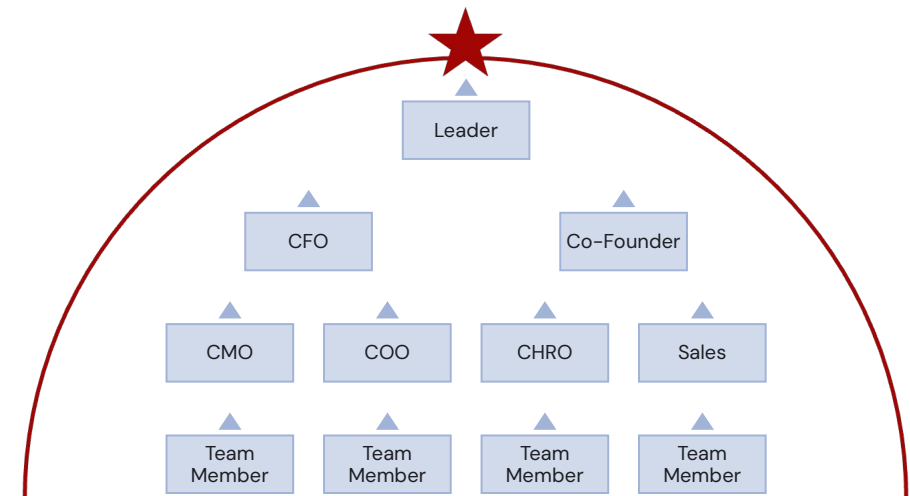
We assume everyone is moving in a **common direction** toward the **same goal**.

### THE CATCH

Without constant work on process and consistency, this is just fantasy.

### THE DREAM

## Our North Star



## THE HARD TRUTH

# What is really happening

### 1 It shows up in performance.

You see it in the monthly numbers: missed sales and margin that quietly slips away.

### 2 Most conflict starts here.

It's where good people get frustrated, and where you lose them.

### 3 It's nobody's fault.

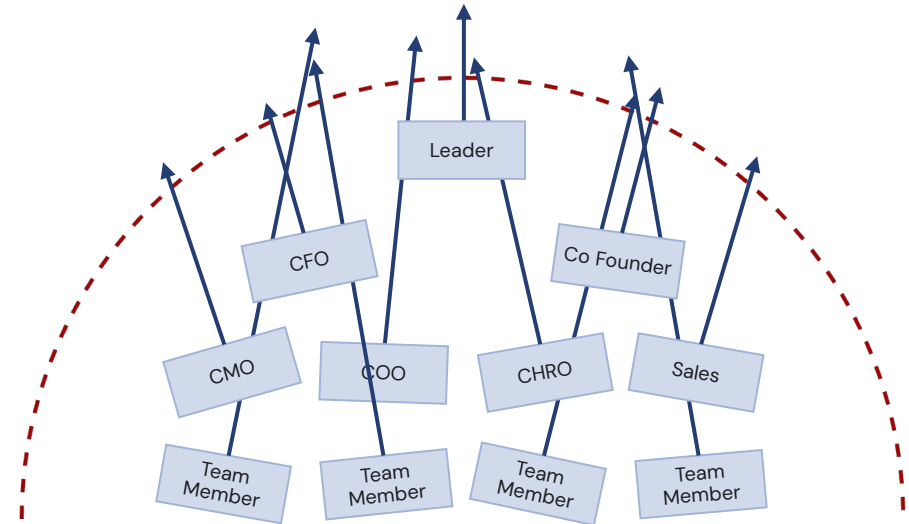
But it's the reason you're still answering emails at 11 PM.

### 4 It's a systemic issue.

Left alone, it doesn't fade. It compounds until someone intervenes.

## THE REALITY

### The Arc of Misalignment



## WHERE ENGAGEMENT BREAKS

# We are all awesome. But are we all aligned?



### 01 · CULTURE

#### Misaligned with the culture

No sense of belonging. Out of tune with the values. Low trust in leaders. Burnout.



### 02 · ROLE

#### Misaligned with the role

Hired for résumé checkboxes over coachability, EQ, motivation and temperament.



### 03 · MANAGER

#### Misaligned with the manager

Most managers mean well but are ill-equipped to coach, communicate and manage.



### 04 · TEAM

#### Misaligned with the team

No shared mission, vision or values. Little collaboration, support or communication.

*Any one of these can crush productivity. **Two or more can cripple an entire team.***

HOW DOES YOUR TEAM FUNCTION UNDER PRESSURE?

# How elite teams win in times of change

**01**

## Communication cadence

Information flow patterns that accelerate decision-making in uncertain environments.

**02**

## Cognitive diversity

Teams that think differently under pressure and bring multiple perspectives to complex problems.

**03**

## Psychological safety

Environments where bad news travels fast and people feel secure sharing concerns.

**04**

## Adaptive capacity

Teams that pivot without losing momentum when market conditions change.

# Your team readiness check-up

Score your team from 1 (not ready) to 10 (fully ready) for change. Circle your lowest number. **That is your biggest gap.**

|           |                                                                                |                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01</b> | <b>Communication cadence</b><br>Does information flow speed up decisions?      | <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> |
| <b>02</b> | <b>Cognitive diversity</b><br>Can the team see problems from multiple angles?  | <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> |
| <b>03</b> | <b>Psychological safety</b><br>Does bad news travel fast? Can people speak up? | <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> |
| <b>04</b> | <b>Adaptive capacity</b><br>Can the team pivot and keep its momentum?          | <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> |

**AT YOUR TABLE:** Share your lowest score and why. What one action would close that gap in the next 90 days?

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF CHANGE

# Change is an event. Transition is a process.

Change is a collective process, individually experienced.

### CHANGE

## What happens to us.

The external event: a new strategy, a new leader, an acquisition, a new system.

*Change can happen very quickly.*

### TRANSITION

## What happens within us.

The inner, psychological process people go through as they come to terms with the new situation.

*Transition takes time.*

*The starting point is not the outcome. **It is the endings people experience as they leave the old situation behind.***

# Growth to scale, run through the formula

Because the factors multiply, a strong vision cannot rescue a team that does not feel the problem.

**D** **X**

## DISSATISFACTION

*"Sales keep growing, but profits don't keep pace."*

---

Make the cost of the status quo visible to the team. Ask front line for suggestions.

**V** **X**

## VISION

*The CEO is the architect and defines the future.*

---

Describe the scale column in plain words your front line would use.

**P** **>**

## PLAN

*Blueprint. Validate. Prepare. Teach. Scale.*

---

State the stage you are in, the next step, due date, and who owns it.

**R**

## RESISTANCE

*The old way worked in their mind. Letting go is hard.*

---

Expect it. **Honor what got you here before asking people to let go.**

*Most first-time scalers run the plan backward: **expand first, hire in a panic, install systems mid-crisis.***

# Run your change through the formula

Score D, V and P from 1 to 5 for your change initiative(s). Because they multiply, **your lowest score sets the ceiling.**

## D

### DISSATISFACTION

Does your team feel the cost of staying where we are, or only you?

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

## V

### VISION

Can every leader describe what "better" looks like in one sentence?

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

## P

### PLAN

Do people know the first concrete steps, and who owns each one?

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 5

## R

### RESISTANCE

What will people lose?  
Who stands to lose the most?

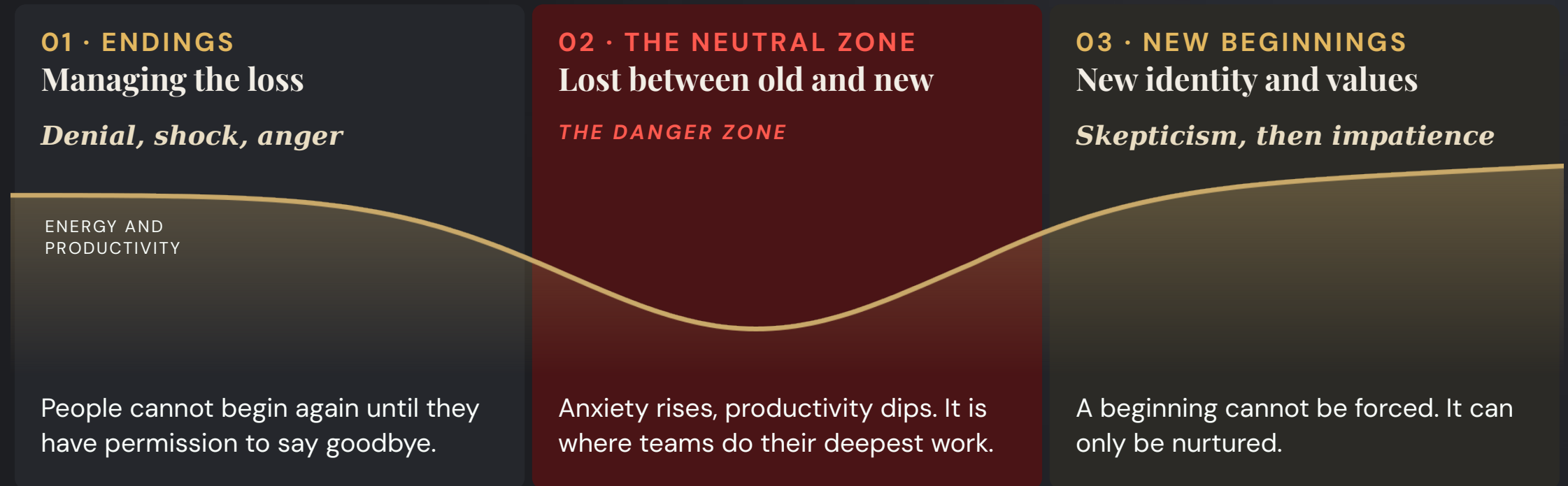
Low · Medium · High

**AT YOUR TABLE:** Which factor is weakest? What one move would strengthen it this month?

## BRIDGES' TRANSITION MODEL

# Three zones every team moves through

Organizations **announce** change. People move through **transition** on their own timeline.



*Leaders often skip the endings. They celebrate the future while their teams are still grieving the past.*

# Plan the message before you deliver it

Core messages first. Then translate them for each stakeholder group.

CORE MESSAGES

What is changing?

Why is it changing?

How does it connect to our values and the bigger picture?

STAKEHOLDER MESSAGES

| QUESTION                                          | Stakeholder 1 | Stakeholder 2 | Stakeholder 3 |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| What is the value or benefit to them?             |               |               |               |
| What will change look like for them?              |               |               |               |
| What do they need to do differently, and when?    |               |               |               |
| How will they be supported in the change journey? |               |               |               |
| What will success look like (in measures)?        |               |               |               |

# 06

PART SIX · ENGAGE

## How great CEOs engage the team

*Teams do not just execute strategy. They are the strategy.*

---

It runs on **trust**.

## STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

# Not everyone will embrace the decision

Map the room before you try to move it. You do not need to convert opponents into champions.

WANTS CHANGE

DEFENDS THE STATUS QUO

### THE SPECTRUM

#### Every team has both ends

Some stakeholders are comfortable with change and want it. Others fear it and will defend the status quo.

### THE TIMING

#### Who, when, and how

Successful leaders know when and how to engage which stakeholders, at the right strategic time.

### THE COST

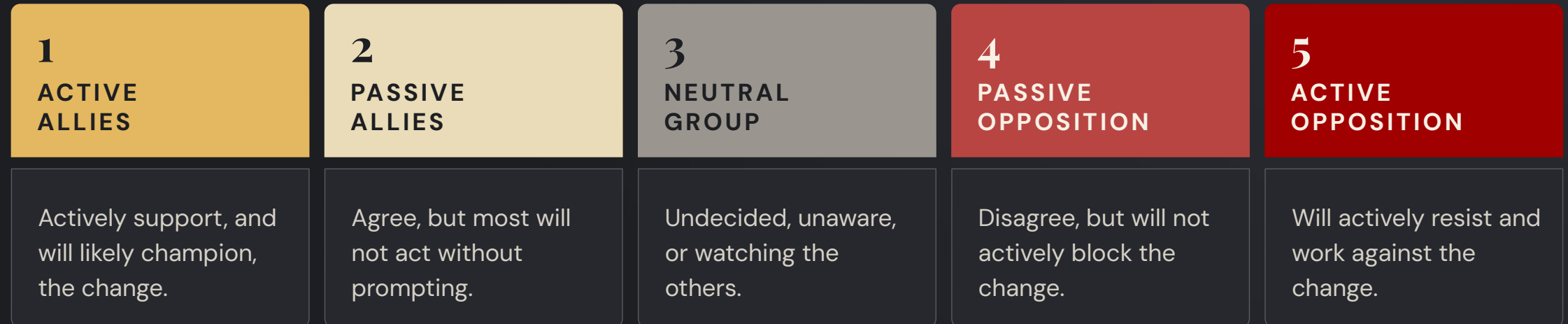
#### Resistance sets the price

The investment required, and the change achieved, relate directly to the level of resistance.

## STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

# The Spectrum of Allies

Map the room before you try to move it. **You do not need to convert opponents into champions.**



*The goal: help each group move one position to the left.*

EXERCISE · 5 MINUTES

# Map your stakeholders

Use the Spectrum of Allies worksheet for the change you named.

1 · ACTIVE ALLIES

2 · PASSIVE ALLIES

3 · NEUTRAL

4 · PASSIVE OPP.

5 · ACTIVE OPP.

## 1 Place them

Write 6 to 8 names under the position each person holds today. Not the one you hope for.

## 2 Pick two

Circle the two people whose move would shift the most others. Often a passive ally or a respected neutral.

## 3 Name one action

For each, one specific action this week to move them one position to the left.

**AT YOUR TABLE**

Share your two people and your actions. Ask your table: who am I missing?

# The cadence of candor

In an information vacuum, people do not assume the best. **They invent the worst possible scenarios.**

## 1 Say what you know.

Partial truth delivered now beats perfect truth delivered late.

---

### WHAT TO DO

- Lead with what changed and why.
- Use plain words.
- Repeat it more than feels natural.

## 2 Say what you don't know.

Naming unknowns is what makes the things you are sure of believable.

---

### WHAT TO DO

- Keep a list of open questions.
- Never bluff. It costs a year of trust.
- Ask the team to help close gaps.

## 3 Name the next update.

Anxiety lives in silence. A named date keeps people steady.

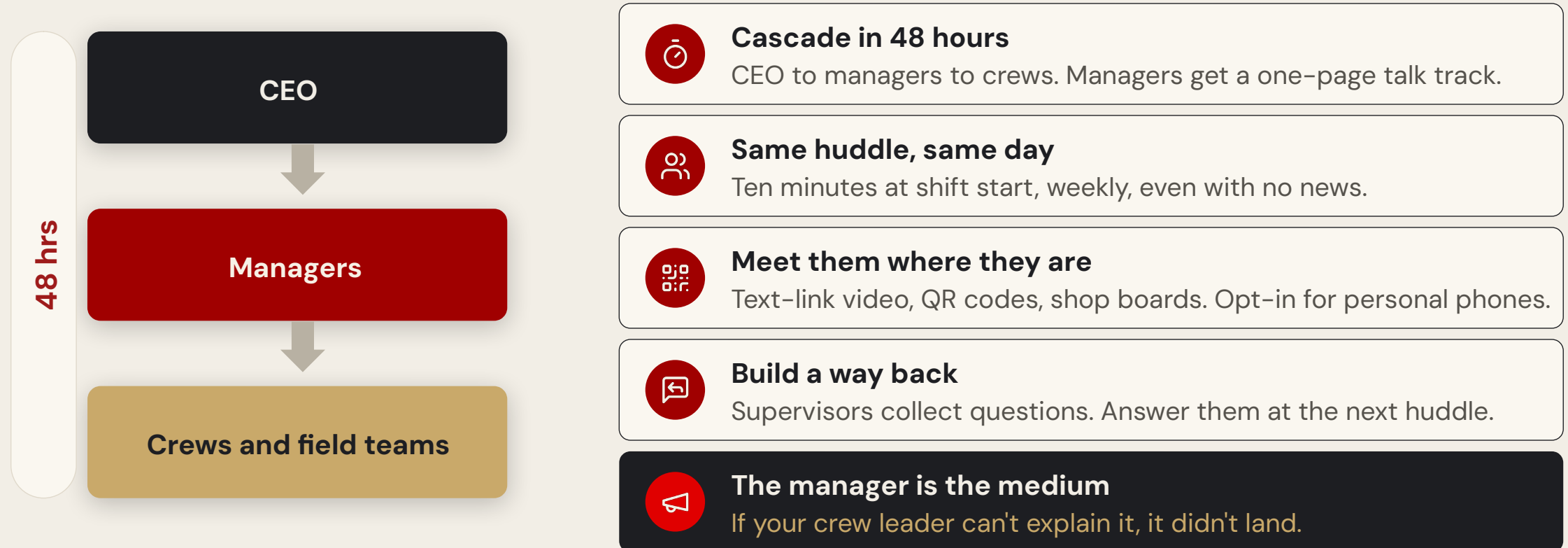
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### WHAT TO DO

- Set the time for the next update.
- Keep it, even if nothing changed.
- No news, as promised, is news.

## REACHING THE FIELD

# If the front line can't hear it, you haven't said it



# 07

PART SEVEN · EQUIP

## Equip the middle

*Expert to manager, line of sight, and decisions without you*

---

Change runs through **managers**.

YOUR MANAGERS' TRANSITION

# From expert to business manager

Your managers are making the same move you are, one level down.

WHAT GOT THEM HERE

WHAT THE JOB NOW NEEDS

Doing the work well



Getting work done through others

Technical quality



Technical quality and margin

Knowing the answer



Asking the next question

Protecting my crew



Explaining the business to my crew

Escalating decisions



Deciding inside clear guardrails

*The left column made them individually great. **The right allows you to scale the business.***

## THE PATTERN OF DOOM

# You promote your best technician into management with minimal training. It's a roll of the dice.



70% of the variance in team engagement comes from the manager.

GALLUP



60% of new managers underperform or fail within 24 months.

CEB/GARTNER



Only 20% of HR leaders have ready-now successors for key roles.

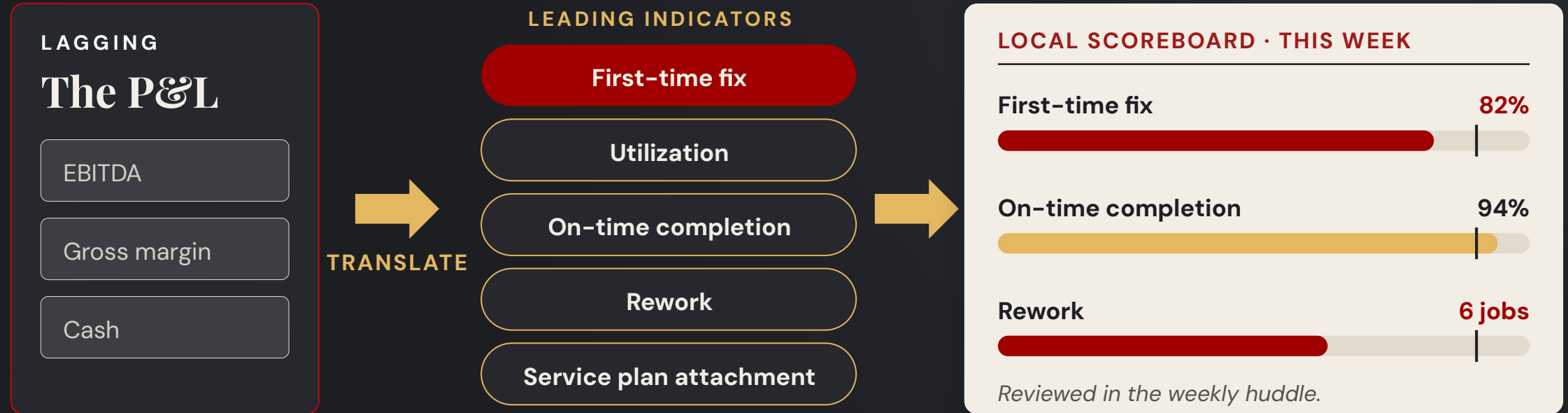
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### FROM YOUR SURVEY

*"Outstanding technical subject matter experts who have been promoted into leadership, but they frequently struggle to act as effective business managers and clear communicators."*

## LINE OF SIGHT

# Measure people on what they can move this week



**Weekly, on one page.** Review leading indicators in the huddle.

**Shared outcomes, team metrics.** Don't pin a shared result on one role.

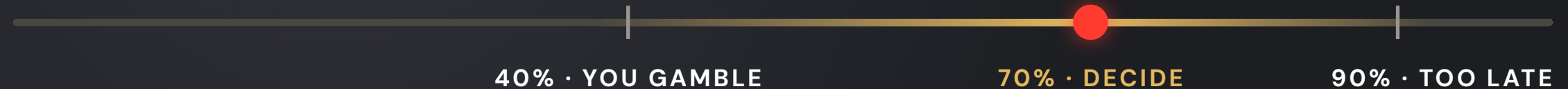
**Ensure line of sight.** If people say "I don't control that," fix the metric or show the link.

## THE SPEED OF GOOD DECISIONS

# 70%

*Act when you have about seventy percent of the information you wish you had.*

If you wait for 90%, the decision moment has passed.



A METHOD YOU CAN TEACH

# The FOCUS decision method

A structured process for high-stakes decisions when time is short. **It turns chaos into clarity.**

**F**

## Frame the situation

Avoid scope creep.  
Name the constraints on the decision.

**O**

## Organize the data you have

What do you know?  
What are the unknowns and assumptions?

**C**

## Clarify what you know

Use the 40 to 70 percent rule when perfect data is not available.

**U**

## Understand your options

Find at least two.  
Weigh the likely outcome of each.

**S**

## Select a go-forward plan

Execute with clear ownership, timelines, and resources.

*Elite leaders don't just respond to disruption. They anticipate it.*

### FOCUS Model for Decision Making

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| <b>F</b><br>Frame    | Notes |
| <b>O</b><br>Organize | Notes |
| <b>C</b><br>Clarify  | Notes |
| <b>U</b><br>Options  | Notes |
| <b>S</b><br>Select   | Notes |

### HOW TO TEACH IT TO YOUR TEAM

## The FOCUS model in action

Teach your team to think the way you would think. Move from guesswork to thoughtful decisions.

### 1 Work it together

Use the worksheet as you help a team member work through a decision.

### 2 They draft, you discuss

After two or three rounds, they complete it and bring it to you before acting.

### 3 Set boundaries, then let go

Within agreed boundaries, they decide on their own and copy you on the form.

# Which discipline does your team skip most?

01 · Define the real decision

02 · Is this Reversible or not

03 · Decide at 70%, don't wait

04 · Say the why not just the what

05 · Set the review point

- 1 Pick the one discipline your team skips most. Take a quick vote at your table.
- 2 Share a recent decision where skipping it cost you time, money, or trust.
- 3 What would it take to build it into your weekly operating rhythm?

DECISION RIGHTS EVERYONE CAN NAME

# The Authority Matrix

Most founder-led companies run every decision as invisible red. Make the colors visible, then widen green.

| DECISION AREA                        | GREEN · FREE TO DECIDE                 | YELLOW · ALIGN FIRST            | RED · CEO SIGNS OFF                 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Spending</b><br>CFO               | Budgeted opex within plan, under \$25K | Unbudgeted \$25K to \$100K      | Over \$100K or any unbudgeted capex |
| <b>Hiring &amp; org</b><br>HR LEADER | Budgeted backfills below director      | New roles, director-level hires | N-1 executives, comp plans, any RIF |
| <b>Pricing</b><br>SALES LEADER       | Standard price book and bands          | Discounts of 10% to 20%         | Over 20%, multi-year locks          |
| <b>M&amp;A</b><br>INTEGRATION OWNER  | Target list and market map             | Intro calls, diligence prep     | LOIs, purchase agreements           |

*The company can only move as fast as its most overloaded decider. **Get the wait out of the work.***

# Design systems that bend without breaking

Resilient teams are ordinary people working inside well-designed systems.

## 1 Decision rights everyone can name

Disruption should never become paralysis.

## 2 Rhythms that surface problems early

Bad news must travel fast. Does your environment support that?

## 3 Redundancy in mission-critical roles

One person exiting should never stall the mission.

## 4 Enough slack in the calendar to accommodate the urgent

A team at full capacity cannot absorb surprise.

## 5 Real psychological safety in the workplace

Saying "this is not working" must be career-safe.

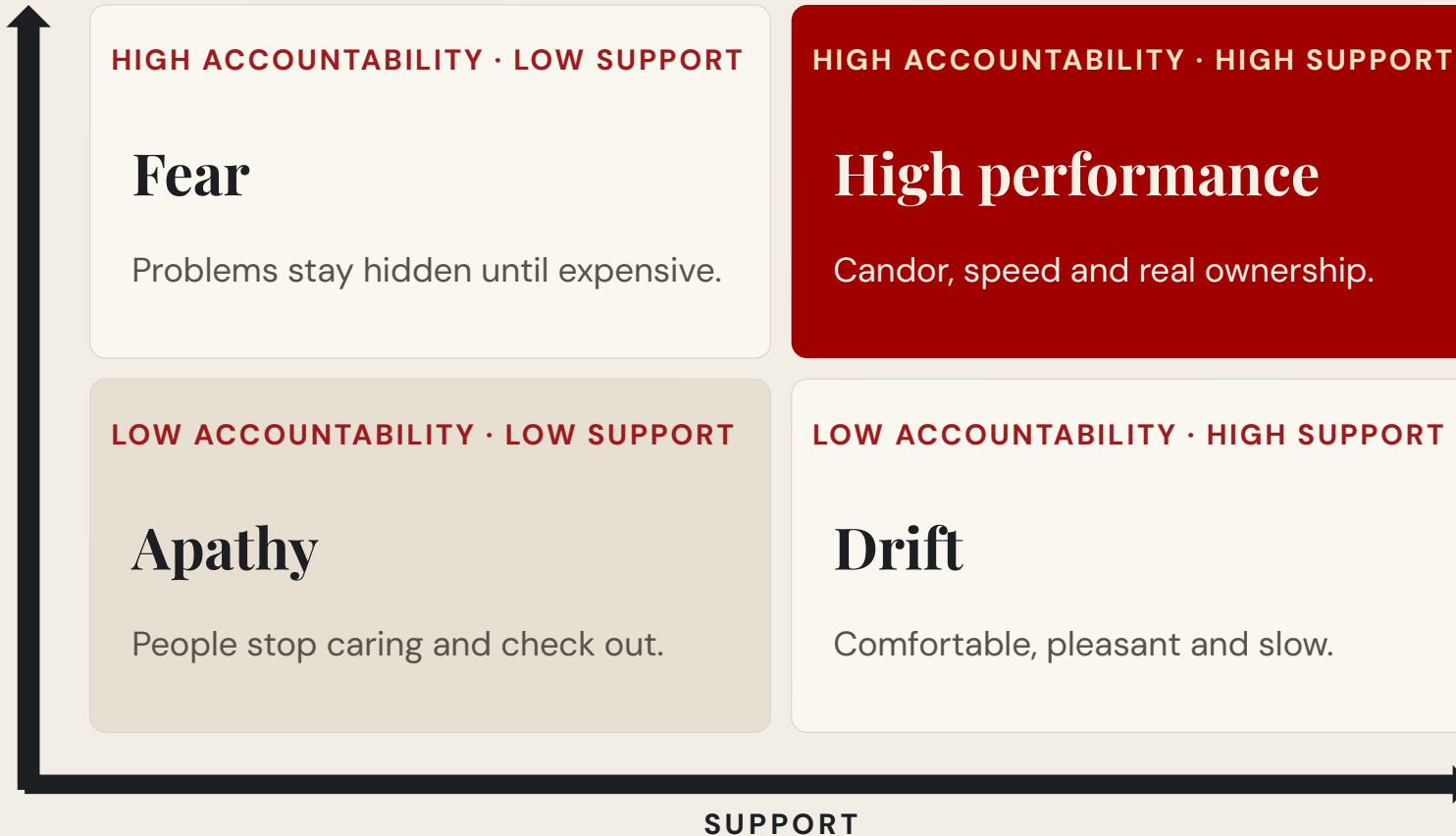
## 6 Recovery must be built into the system

Rest is part of the performance system.

## THE BALANCE

# Support and accountability are not a trade-off

ACCOUNTABILITY



Support without accountability creates **drift**.

Accountability without support creates **fear**.

---

Your best leaders want clarity: what winning looks like, and how they will be measured.

# 08

PART EIGHT · LEAD

## Preparing yourself to lead others

*Your role, your development, and the reserves you need to lead*

---

It starts with **you.**

## YOUR OWN TRANSITION

# From chief problem-solver to chief architect

Leaders move through Bridges' zones too. Your ending is the left column.

### WHAT GOT YOU HERE

Being the primary problem-solver in the room



Knowing every customer and every deal personally



Heroic effort: outworking every problem



Being the hub every decision passes through



### WHAT GETS YOU THERE

Building people who solve problems without you

Building a company that knows every customer

Designed cadence: the rhythm does the remembering

Architect of decisions you are no longer part of

*The hardest part is that the left column worked. **You are not abandoning a failure. You are retiring a success so the business can scale.***

GREAT EXECUTION BEGINS WITH TRUST

# Trust is like oxygen.

We don't think about it until we don't have it.  
Without enough, everything takes more effort and more stress.

*"Teamwork is really a form of trust."*

COACH PAT SUMMITT

WHEN PEOPLE TRUST EACH OTHER AND THEIR LEADERS, THEY WILL

- 01 Work through disagreements.
- 02 Take smarter risks.
- 03 Work harder and stay longer.
- 04 Contribute better ideas.
- 05 **Give you their discretionary effort.**

## THE MIRROR

# Your team follows your emotional cues, not your words

01

How do I respond when someone brings me bad news?

02

Does my face say "angry," or "thank you, let's fix this"?

03

Do I reward truth, or do I only reward success?

04

Do I actively listen, or am I quick to judge?

*Great leaders model vulnerability, invite disagreement, and reward truth-telling. **Performance follows trust. It never precedes it.***

## THE LAWS

# Five things great leaders do

### LAW ONE

**Build for the company you are becoming.**

Ask what every role must deliver 12 to 24 months from now, not today.

### LAW TWO

**Hire for complement, not brilliance.**

A team is a system, not a group of stars. Sameness multiplies blind spots.

### LAW THREE

**Develop leaders and own it personally.**

Not an HR program. Stretch assignments and direct coaching.

### LAW FOUR

**Create safety before demanding performance.**

Safety is not softness. It is speed. Safe teams correct faster.

### LAW FIVE

**Make accountability clear and consistent.**

High performers want to know what winning looks like.

### THE THROUGH-LINE

**Design it.  
Develop it.  
Consistently deliver it.**

# Five laws scorecard

Five things great leaders do. Where is your leadership team strong, and where is it thin?

1

## Rate

Score your leadership team on each law from things great leaders do – from 1 to 5.

2

## Circle the lowest

One law. What will you do in the next 90 days to improve that law?

3

## Compare

Which law is lowest across the table? Who has solved it? How did they solve it?

### RATE YOUR COMPANY ON EACH LAW

**01 Build for the company you are becoming.**

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**02 Hire for complement, not brilliance.**

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**03 Develop leaders and own it personally.**

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**04 Create safety before demanding performance.**

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**05 Make accountability clear and consistent.**

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Lowest law: \_\_\_\_\_ One action in the next 90 days: \_\_\_\_\_

# 09

## PART NINE · SUMMARY

### Final thoughts

*What to take back to your team*

---

Reflect on today's insights. **What will you do differently?**

## TAKE IT HOME

# Six moves for Monday morning

One action from each part of the framework. Pick the two that matter most for your live change.



01

## Diagnose

Run the readiness check-up with your leadership team.



02

## Choose

Name three to five rocks. Stop one thing.



03

## Align

Say the fixed point out loud, every week.



04

## Engage

Map your stakeholders. Cascade in 48 hours.



05

## Equip

Give each manager line of sight and a decision lane.



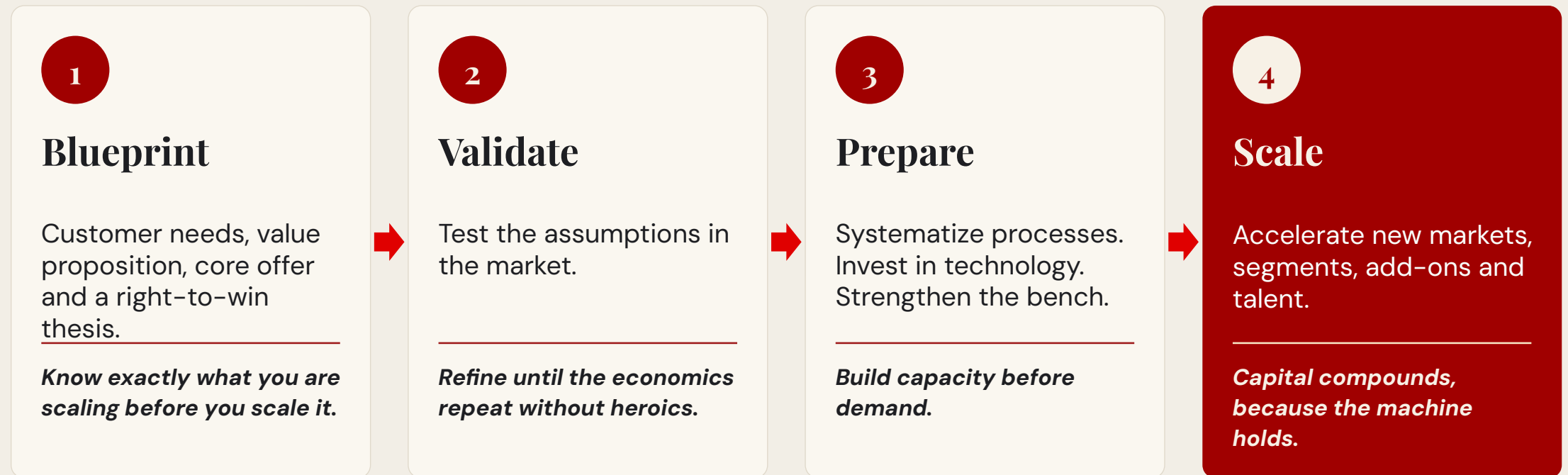
06

## Lead

Keep your 30-day commitment.

## THE SEQUENCE

# Blueprint. Validate. Prepare. Scale.



## THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

# The scalable management system

Scale is not a one-time project. It is a cadence, a governance model, and an architecture.



### THE CADENCE

#### Rhythm and KPIs

Weekly flash, monthly P&L review, quarterly reset, all run against a focused set of enterprise KPIs.



### THE DECISIONS

#### Rights and accountability

Decision-rights maps that push choices down and make them faster. Governance should speed the business up.



### THE ARCHITECTURE

#### Systems and playbooks

Shared services where duplication exists, scalable data and systems, and an integration playbook.

*Build it before you need it. **Installing systems mid-crisis is how growth plans die.***

# Commercial Excellence | Sales

|              | <div>Phase 1</div> <div>Strategy &amp; Positioning</div>                                                                                                                                             | <div>Phase 2</div> <div>Engine Architecture</div>                                                                                                                                                            | <div>Phase 3</div> <div>Tools, Data and Integrations</div>                                                                                                                                                                     | <div>Phase 4</div> <div>Operating Cadence</div>                                                                                                                                                                | <div>Phase 5</div> <div>Exit Narrative</div>                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What         | Decide where to play and how to win; define ICPs, value proposition, routes to market, and growth logic                                                                                              | Translate strategy into system design: CRM, org model, incentives, and demand-gen                                                                                                                            | Deploy technology and unify data flows across CRM, GTM tools, ERP, and finance                                                                                                                                                 | Institutionalize KPIs, forecasting, account coverage, and performance reviews                                                                                                                                  | Synthesize performance into a cohesive commercial story supported by data, case studies, and leadership                                                                                                             |
| Why          | Anchors the growth thesis, aligns leadership on target markets, and sets requirements for a Predictable Business Model, Observable Organic Growth, and Best-in-Class Processes                       | Hard-wires Best-in-Class Processes, creates scalability, and defines inputs to sustain a Predictable Business Model and repeatable Growth                                                                    | Creates a single source of truth: confidence in results (Predictable Business Model), scalable systems (Best-In-Class Processes), and visibility to sustain Growth                                                             | Converts infrastructure into discipline, proving a Predictable Business Model and growth is Observable, not episodic                                                                                           | Integrates all three drivers into a diligence-ready narrative—reducing risk, validating scalability, and supporting premium valuation.                                                                              |
| How          | GTM Strategy Session                                                                                                                                                                                 | Growth System Design                                                                                                                                                                                         | GTM Data & Systems Build                                                                                                                                                                                                       | GTM Infrastructure Build                                                                                                                                                                                       | Exit Readiness                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Deliverables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Documented GTM Plan (ICP, Value Prop, TAM)</li><li>Prioritized growth vectors (new, expansion, retention)</li><li>Sales &amp; Marketing Process Maps</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CRM Selection Guide &amp; Design Blueprint</li><li>Org/Comp Design</li><li>Demand &amp; lead gen framework with KPIs</li><li>Data &amp; governance standards</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tech stack deployment (CRM, marketing &amp; sales tools)</li><li>Board-ready reporting templates</li><li>Cross-systems integrations</li><li>Unified Dashboards (CAC, NRR, LTV)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Standardized KPI set</li><li>Forecasting methodology &amp; CRM discipline</li><li>Account management model</li><li>Performance dashboards &amp; review cadence</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exit Readiness Checklist</li><li>Investor-ready dashboards &amp; reporting package</li><li>Customer success outcomes and case studies</li><li>Integrated leadership</li></ul> |

## Three Critical Exit Value Drivers

01

**Predictable Business Model**

- Standardized metrics & reporting create reliable forecasts
- Transparent funnel visibility (lead → conversion → retention)
- Confidence in the *results being presented*

02

**Observable Organic Growth**

- Revenue growth outpacing cost growth
- Multiple levers for expansion (products, markets, segments)
- Confidence in the *scalability of top-line growth*

03

**Best-in-Class Processes**

- Modern, automated tech stack & workflows
- Scalable systems that reduce diligence & integration risk
- Confidence in the *engine that produces the results*

# Commercial Excellence | Go-to-Market Process Mapping



BEFORE YOU GO

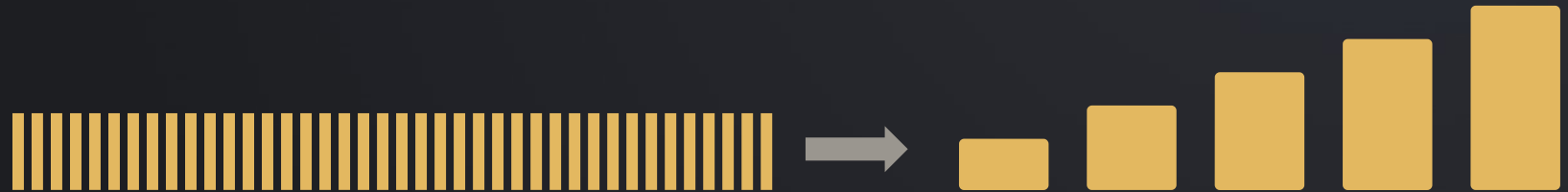
The curse of discipline is that every day looks the same.  
*The curse of indiscipline is that **every year** does.*

EVERY DAY

EVERY YEAR

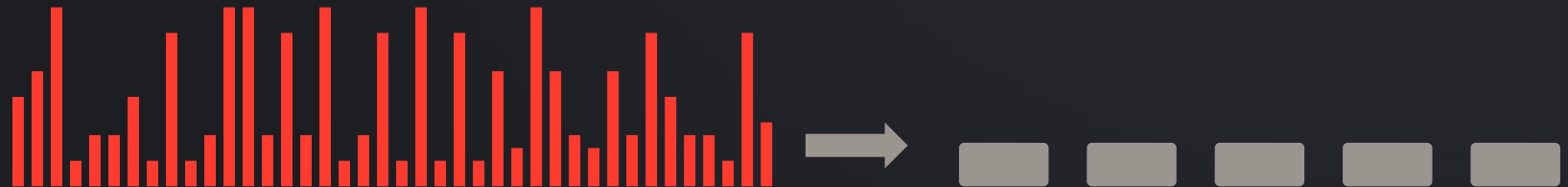
## Discipline

*Ordinary days. Extraordinary years.*



## Indiscipline

*Exciting days. The same year, again.*



*There's no dress rehearsal in life. You get one shot. Make it count.*