

Whitepaper | Laurent Corneille

The Strategy Cascade

Why human performance data reveals what the org chart cannot

Three measurable conditions determine whether your organization can carry your strategy. None of them appear on an org chart. All of them can be established before you commit to the cascade, and tracked while you deliver it.



In Brief

- ③ Most strategy cascades fail because of structural conditions inside the organization, which is why better communication so rarely rescues them. Those conditions are measurable before the cascade begins.
- ③ Three measurable conditions determine whether an organization can carry a strategy: whether the message can travel to the people who must act on it (Reach), whether they will act once it arrives (Belief), and whether it still means the same thing at the far end (Coherence).
- ③ Research on how behaviour spreads through networks shows that an organization can be broadly supportive of a strategy and still produce no cascade at all. Propagation depends on network structure and individual thresholds, which average sentiment barely captures. This is why engagement scores are an unreliable guide to execution.

- ③ Formal authority and informal influence are rarely held by the same people. The size of that gap is among the strongest available predictors of whether a cascade will land.
- ③ These conditions are rates. A single measurement establishes where an organization stands; only repeated measurement reveals whether it is moving, and at what speed. During a transformation that is the question leadership has to keep answering, while there is still time to act on the answer.
- ③ Generic network analysis is not sufficient. The Human Performance Operating System reads an organization's structure, its strategy and the reasoning behind that strategy, so the analysis answers one specific question: can this organization carry this strategy?

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The January Problem

You have sat in that room. The strategy is sharp, the executive team is genuinely aligned, and the plan for the year ahead is better than last year's. Nine months later, something has gone wrong that nobody quite predicted.

Objectives that were precise at the top have gone soft by the third layer down. Two functions are solving the same problem without knowing it. A business unit that agreed to everything in the room has been running a subtly different interpretation ever since. The strategy has not changed. It has simply had to survive contact with the organization.

This is among the most expensive recurring failures in corporate life, and it is almost entirely undiagnosed. Organizations invest heavily in getting the strategy right and in aligning the top team behind it. They invest almost nothing in establishing whether the organization underneath that top team is structurally capable of carrying it. The cost of that omission never appears as a line item. It appears as slower execution, duplicated effort, quiet disengagement, and a transformation that technically launched and never really moved.

There are two distinct ways this goes wrong, and only one of them is well understood.

- ② The first is that the operating model no longer fits the strategy: governance, structure, resources, processes and technology were designed for a different purpose and were never reset to serve the new one. That failure mode has a name, a discipline and a well-established remedy, though doing it properly means a genuine reassessment of how the future operating model delivers the strategy rather than a rearrangement of the deck chairs.
- ② The second is subtler and largely unmeasured. The operating model can be redesigned correctly and the strategy can still fail to land, because the human system inside the structure, the relationships and trust and decision-making norms through which work actually happens, was never assessed for whether it could carry the change.

This paper is about the *second*.

The argument of this paper is narrow, and I think uncomfortable: that failure is rarely a surprise. Not in the loose sense that experienced leaders can feel trouble coming, but in the specific sense that the structural conditions which determine whether a cascade succeeds can be measured before it begins. Most organizations choose not to measure them, and therefore discover the answer at precisely the point where it can no longer change the plan.

02

Why More Communication Does Not Fix It

A truly transformative strategy necessarily entails doing less, doing more and doing new, for different customers, in different markets.

An organization that was designed for a different purpose inherently is not aligned, but this is typically accepted with a 'we will power through' or 'we will avoid difficult reorganization'. Instead, the push is towards more town halls, more cascaded decks, more manager toolkits, more channels. This is a rational response to a misdiagnosis, and it is remarkably persistent, largely because communication is the intervention leadership teams control most directly.

It rarely works, for a reason that is easy to state and harder to accept: the binding constraint is usually not the supply of information. In one recent engagement, every formal communication channel was performing at or above its targets. Content was being opened, read and attended. Engagement with the transformation had nonetheless been flat for the better part of two years. That organization had no shortage of information. It was structurally inconsistent with the strategy and therefore unable to convert any of it into behaviour.

That conversion, from message received to work done differently, does not happen through channels. It happens through people. It depends on who is trusted, who is watched, who is believed, and how those people are connected to one another. These are properties of a network rather than of a communications plan, and unlike culture in the abstract, they are measurable.

Which means the question worth asking before a cascade begins is not whether the communication plan is strong enough. It is whether the organization has the structural capacity to carry the change at all. That question resolves into three specific conditions.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

Adding communication to a stalled cascade addresses the only variable leadership fully controls. It is rarely the variable that is binding.



LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

Action

Why it matters

Separate the readiness question from the communication plan

Establish whether the organization can carry the strategy before deciding how to tell people about it. These are two different problems with two different solutions.

Stop treating channel metrics as evidence of landing

Open rates and attendance measure distribution. They say nothing about whether behaviour changed. Require measures of belief and behaviour instead.

Put readiness into the transformation business case

Cost the diagnosis up front. It is materially cheaper than the recovery work required when a cascade has to be relaunched.

PRACTITIONER VOICE

Why does strategy to operating model alignment so often get diluted, and what happens to a transformation when governance, roles and resources end up running counter to the strategy?

“

Strategy and operating model alignment is arguably the most consequential component of realising a new strategic vision, but is often ignored or diluted in terms of focus, typically due to 'lack of a clear owner of such profound change' and the perceived risks that come from structural change. Equally, we have heard from leadership on uncertainty on 'how to' assess the nature of organizational change that is required, due to lack of established successful precedents for large scale organizational structure change being successful. This typically leads to governance, roles, accountabilities, power and resources in the organization running counter to the strategy and transformation intent. No amount of communication, training or information sharing can overcome this disconnect.



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03

The Three Conditions of Cascade Readiness

Whether an organization can carry a strategy comes down to **three questions**.

- ① Each has a substantial research base behind it.
- ② Each is measurable.
- ③ And none of them can be answered by looking at an org chart.

1. Reach: can the message travel?

An org chart is a hypothesis about how an organization works. It assumes authority, information and trust all flow along the same lines. In practice they rarely do. Underneath every formal structure runs a second, informal one: the actual network of who people go to for advice, who they trust enough to be honest with under pressure, and whose view of a new initiative genuinely changes how they behave.

Reach is a property of that second structure. Some people function as bridges, connecting parts of the business that would otherwise be disconnected, and they are frequently two or three levels below the executive team. When a cascade is designed without knowing who they are, the message stays trapped in the pockets where it started, however many channels were used to broadcast it. Equally, a leader can hold significant formal authority and have almost no informal presence at all. A cascade routed through that person has no route to travel by.

THE SCIENCE

What centrality actually measures

Network science distinguishes several different kinds of importance, and conflating them is the most common error in reading a network map.

Degree centrality counts how many people come to you; demand, but not necessarily trust. Betweenness centrality measures how often you sit on the only path between two parts of the business; these are the brokers, and removing one fragments the network (Granovetter, 1973; Freeman, 1977; Burt, 1992). Eigenvector centrality asks whether the people who come to you are themselves influential, distinguishing being widely known from being trusted by the trusted (Bonacich, 1972). For cascade purposes, eigenvector centrality is usually the measure that matters most, because a strategy propagates on credibility.

A leader can carry a large span of formal control and a degree centrality at or near zero. We measure this regularly. It says nothing about how well they do their job, and everything about what will happen to a message routed through them.

THE SCIENCE

Why a supportive organization can still produce no cascade

Threshold models of collective behaviour hold that each individual will act only once a certain proportion of their contacts already have (Granovetter, 1978). Placing those thresholds onto a realistic network, where each person sees only their own contacts, shows that cascades depend on whether low-threshold adopters happen to form a connected cluster (Watts, 2002).

Two practical implications follow. A strategy with broad approval can fail to move if its supporters are scattered across the network rather than clustered. And a highly connected individual with a high personal threshold can block propagation entirely, because a large number of contacts means a large number must move before they will, so the organization's best-connected people are not automatically its best transmitters. Later work sharpens the distinction this framework rests on: information travels as a simple contagion, needing a single exposure, while a change in behaviour is a complex contagion, requiring several independent and mutually reinforcing contacts before anyone moves (Centola and Macy, 2007; Centola, 2018). This is why Reach and Belief are two conditions and not two descriptions of one.

2. Belief: will people act on it?

Arrival is rarely adoption. People do not generally change how they work because a slide instructed them to; they change when people they trust have visibly already changed, and it now feels safe, sensible or unavoidable to follow. Everyone carries a threshold for this (how much movement they need to see among their peers before acting themselves), and those thresholds vary enormously across an organization.

The consequence is counter-intuitive and commercially significant. An organization can be broadly supportive of a strategy and still produce no cascade whatsoever, because propagation depends on whether the willing are connected to one another, not on how many of them there are. This is the single clearest reason why engagement survey scores are unreliable as a predictor of execution: they measure the average, and cascades are governed by the distribution and the wiring.

3. Coherence: does it still mean the same thing?

The third condition is the one that looks like success for longest. Teams and business units can appear aligned in every meeting while independently drifting apart in how they interpret the strategy, not because anyone disagrees openly, but because each group is largely listening to itself, adjusting its understanding in small, locally reasonable increments that nobody outside the group ever observes.

What diverges is not anyone's stated position but the meaning attached to words everyone has already agreed on: two units can both commit to the same strategic priority and translate it into materially different decisions on Monday morning. No single decision causes this. It accumulates over time, like a rocket aimed

at the moon that leaves the pad a fraction of a degree off course. A small error in the initial condition becomes a million-mile gap at the destination.

What makes divergence dangerous is that it is self-sealing. Beyond a certain distance, a group stops seriously weighting information from outside itself, and further broadcast communication no longer closes the gap. At that point the problem has changed character: it is no longer a communication issue that better messaging can fix, but a structural separation that requires deliberate reconnection. Aggregate engagement scores conceal this almost perfectly, because each cluster is internally coherent and reports itself as such.

THE SCIENCE

How aligned teams drift apart

In opinion dynamics models, individuals update their position by averaging toward those they engage with, which in a well-connected network produces convergence (DeGroot, 1974). Introduce bounded confidence (the realistic assumption that people substantially discount views far from their own) and the same network fragments into internally consistent clusters that stop converging with each other (Hegselmann and Krause, 2002).

The organizational translation is direct: a business unit that consults mainly itself will converge internally and drift from the centre, and past a certain point will no longer weight central messaging heavily enough for it to have effect. These models describe the mechanism of self-sealing rather than its content. What actually diverges in an organization is interpretation, which the sensemaking literature treats as the central problem of strategic change (Weick, 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), and which Carlile (2004) frames as a semantic boundary: the same words carrying different meanings across groups that each believe themselves aligned.

Relatedly, Schelling (1971) demonstrated that very mild individual preferences, such as a slight tendency to consult people similar to oneself, are sufficient to produce near-total structural separation that no individual intended and nobody would defend if asked.

How the three interact

The conditions are not independent, and their failure modes are distinct enough to be worth naming. Reach without Belief produces compliance: people do as instructed, slowly, and stop when unobserved. Belief without Coherence produces energetic misalignment, arguably the most expensive of the three, because it looks like success right up to the point where the outputs do not fit together. Coherence without Reach produces a strategy that is genuinely well understood in the one part of the business that was always going to understand it.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

An organization can be broadly supportive of a strategy and still produce no cascade at all. Sentiment measures the average; propagation depends on the distribution and the wiring. This is why engagement scores are a poor predictor of execution.



THE SCIENCE

What the system measures, and what it infers

The framework draws on three research traditions, and it is worth being precise about which parts of it are measured and which are inferred. Network structure is measured directly: nomination data yields degree, betweenness and eigenvector centrality, and setting that against the organizational chart shows where formal authority and informal influence diverge. Organizational network analysis has been established practice for this for two decades (Cross and Parker, 2004; Cross, 2021).

Individual thresholds are not measured. They are latent, context-dependent, and in practice inferred from observed patterns rather than elicited directly. The threshold literature is therefore doing explanatory work here and not predictive work: it establishes why network structure is decisive, which is what licenses the structural claim. If the willing are not connected to one another, no distribution of thresholds will produce a cascade.

Inference from observational network data warrants care for a further reason: influence and similarity are easily confused, because people who resemble one another tend to cluster anyway (Shalizi and Thomas, 2011). This is why the system triangulates network data against leadership assessment and sentiment rather than reading the network alone, and why a finding carried by a single source is reported as a single-source finding.

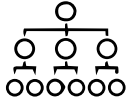
04

Why Context Changes Everything

Everything described so far can, in principle, be measured through network analysis.

In practice, network analysis on its own produces something close to useless for a leadership team: a map of who talks to whom, a set of centrality scores, and a page of observations that would be broadly true of any organization of comparable size. It tells you the shape of your organization. It cannot tell you whether that shape can carry your strategy, because it does not know what your strategy is.

This is the distinction the Human Performance Operating System is built around, and it is what the word system refers to. The platform does not run a survey and produce a report. It holds three layers together in a single model and reasons across all of them at once.



The formal structure.

The current organizational chart: reporting lines, spans of control, levels, and where the business has recently restructured, centralised or acquired. This is what makes the gap between formal authority and informal influence computable at all.



The strategy and its reasoning.

Not only the stated pillars, but the logic underneath them: what the business believes will drive growth, why it has chosen these priorities over others, and what it has explicitly decided not to do. This is the layer most diagnostics ignore, and it is the one that converts data into insight.



The human data.

Network nomination data, structured leadership assessment, and sentiment drawn from coaching conversations and interviews, triangulated so that findings supported by two or more independent sources can be separated from single-source signals.

What the contextual layer buys is specificity. If efficiency is a strategic pillar, then who people go to in order to improve a process becomes a load-bearing question, and the absence of any informal owner for process improvement becomes a direct risk to a named priority rather than an interesting organizational fact. A generic instrument would not have asked. Findings attach to strategic pillars, so a leadership team sees which of its own commitments is structurally exposed. A general assessment of organizational health cannot deliver that, however well produced.

Context also allows the system to distinguish signal from artefact, which matters more than it sounds. A business unit can produce a network score that looks anomalously strong for reasons that have nothing to do with genuine network strength; a survey completed in a different language, a legacy structure that concentrates internal referrals, a small respondent base. Without knowing that unit's acquisition history and structural position, a strong score reads as a strength and gets left alone. With that context, the same number reads as a linguistically isolated cluster and becomes one of the more serious findings in the analysis.

This is precisely the class of error that generic benchmarking produces reliably. And because the model persists after the report is delivered, it can be re-run as the organization itself changes. Better still, it can work quietly in the background. That is what makes it an operating layer, and it matters considerably more than it sounds: enough to warrant its own section.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

A generic network map is interesting. A network map that understands your strategy is actionable. That difference is the contextual layer, and it accounts for most of the value.



THE SCIENCE

Second-order effects and leverage points

Systems thinking holds that interventions in complex systems produce delayed and indirect consequences elsewhere, often invisible to the function that made the intervention (Senge, 1990; Meadows, 2008). A common organizational example: centralising a function delivers genuine and measurable efficiency at group level while quietly dismantling the local advisory relationships that made decisions work. The benefit is immediate and attributable. The cost is delayed, shows up somewhere else as slower or lower-quality decisions, and is almost never traced back to its cause.

The more useful proposition from the same literature is the leverage point: the observation that in any system, a small number of well-chosen interventions produce disproportionate change, while most effort produces very little. Measuring the human system is how those points are located. The alternative is spreading development and communication investment evenly across an organization and hoping.



LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

Action

Why it matters

Give the system your actual strategy, including the reasoning

Analytical quality is bounded by contextual quality. A redacted or summarised strategy produces generic findings that could apply to anyone.

Require findings mapped to your strategic priorities

Insist that output is framed as risk to specific named pillars. General observations about organizational health are unactionable at board level, however well evidenced.

Treat the first measurement as a baseline

Establish it before the cascade so movement is measurable afterwards. A single snapshot cannot tell you whether anything changed.

05

What This Looks Like in Practice

The following is drawn from a recent engagement, fully anonymised.

A mid-sized manufacturer operating across several countries, roughly two years into a major transformation built on four strategic pillars, two of which were efficiency and digital adoption. The organization had grown through acquisition.

It was also, at the point of measurement, managing a change of senior leadership. On paper the programme was performing: the executive team was aligned, and the communications function was hitting every content target it had been set.

Reach.

Several of the organization's most senior leaders, including people whose explicit remit was to carry the transformation narrative through the business, had little or no presence in the informal network. Nobody sought them out for advice, for help navigating the change, or for judgement. Their formal authority was entirely intact; their informal influence was close to zero. At the same time, the single most informally influential person in the business sat outside the executive team, and was leaving. The cascade's actual engine was someone the org chart did not recognise as critical, and for whom no succession planning had therefore been done.

Belief.

The function responsible for producing the transformation's communications had the lowest informal credibility of any function measured. Its people were not sought out for trust, advice or judgement by anyone. The messages were being delivered competently and were not being believed, which is exactly why channel metrics were green while engagement was flat. Separately, the digital pillar was behind schedule and was being managed as a technical problem. The network data showed no informal champions for technology anywhere in the business: formal technology leadership had no informal presence, and what technology credibility existed sat several levels down in project management. The delay had a structural cause: an adoption problem being managed as an engineering one. It surfaced as a strategic risk only because the system knew digital adoption was a pillar.

Coherence.

One business unit, distinct in both language and corporate history from the rest of the group, had drifted into its own reading of the transformation. Its network was almost entirely self-referential, with very limited trusted exchange with the wider organization. In aggregate engagement data this was invisible. What made it findable was context: the unit initially returned one of the strongest network scores in the business, and only its acquisition history and the language of its survey responses exposed that score as an artefact of an isolated cluster.

What This Looks Like in Practice

The same analysis identified real strengths, and they mattered more than the deficits. Trust in immediate managers was exceptionally high by any benchmark. The informal learning network was strong and well distributed. And there was an identifiable cohort of highly capable informal leaders operating one to two levels below where their influence suggested they sat: people already doing the work the transformation required, whom the organization had never located and therefore never deployed.

None of this required data collection beyond a short survey and assessment material the business largely already held. All of it was available before the next phase of the cascade was designed. The organization had been running the transformation for two years without it.

One caveat belongs with this account. All of it came from a single measurement, so it shows what a first look reveals and no more. It does not show what a second measurement would have added, because this organization has so far been measured once. The case for measuring repeatedly, which the next section makes, rests on the research and on what practitioners consistently report rather than on a longitudinal dataset of our own. That distinction is worth stating plainly, because it is the first thing a sceptical reader should want to know.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

The most valuable finding in that engagement was not a weakness. It was a strength nobody had located: a cohort of informal leaders already carrying the change, invisible to the structure that depended on them.



06

Readiness is a Trajectory

There is a limitation in everything described so far, and it is worth stating plainly because it changes how the system should be used.

A single measurement establishes an organization's position. It says nothing about direction. Once a transformation is underway, direction is the more valuable of the two: the question a leadership team has to keep answering is whether the programme is working, and only direction answers it while there is still time to act.

The research the framework rests on makes this point in **three separate ways**.

Cascades are events that unfold in rounds.

In a threshold model, adoption propagates in steps: each person who acts alters the environment of everyone connected to them, pushing some of those people over their own threshold, which alters the environment again. A cascade that is going to succeed and a cascade that is about to die can look nearly identical at the outset. What distinguishes them is what happens between one round and the next. A single snapshot captures initial conditions and nothing more. Propagation cannot be established from a single observation, and no amount of analytical sophistication repairs that; it is a limit on what one measurement can contain.

Coherence loss is a rate.

Divergence accumulates over time. Knowing that a business unit is somewhat out of step today matters much less than knowing whether it is still moving away or has settled. If it is still moving, communication can still reach it. If it has settled at distance, communication has stopped working and something structural is required. Since the mechanism is self-sealing beyond a certain distance, the rate is what tells you how much time you have, and no single measurement produces a rate.

The most consequential effects are delayed by construction.

Complex systems generate consequences at a distance from their cause, in time as well as in structure. The centralisation example above is typical: the efficiency benefit lands immediately and attributably, while the cost to decision quality surfaces months later somewhere else entirely. A measurement regime that only ever looks once is guaranteed to miss precisely the effects that matter most, because it will always be looking before they have arrived.

THE SCIENCE

Why a cascade cannot be observed from a single measurement

The models underpinning this framework are dynamic: they describe processes that unfold over time. Threshold models specify how adoption spreads round by round (Granovetter, 1978; Watts, 2002), opinion dynamics models describe convergence and fragmentation as iterative updating (DeGroot, 1974; Hegselmann and Krause, 2002), and systems thinking is largely an account of delay and feedback (Senge, 1990; Meadows, 2008).

A cross-sectional measurement of a dynamic process yields the starting position and the structure. Both are genuinely useful, and both are more than most organizations have. But the quantity that predicts the outcome, whether the process is accelerating, stalling or reversing, exists only in the difference between measurements. It is different a class of finding altogether, and no single measurement produces it at any level of analytical rigour.

Which is why the Human Performance Operating System is designed to run across the duration of a programme. A one-off measurement is genuinely valuable, and most engagements begin with exactly that: it surfaces findings a leadership team did not have and could not have inferred, and it establishes the baseline against which everything afterwards is read. What it answers is 'where are we?'. Running the system across the life of a transformation, or across a year, answers 'is what we are doing working?', which is the question leadership has to answer repeatedly, and usually under time pressure.

The practical consequence is that the second measurement is worth more than the first, and the third more than the second, because the change between them is itself the finding.

different

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

A single measurement tells you where you are. Only a second one tells you whether anything you did worked. Reach, Belief and Coherence are not states to be assessed once: they are rates, and the rate is the finding.



PRACTITIONER VOICE

You have run this across the life of a programme. What does measuring the rate of change tell a leadership team that a single position cannot?

“

Carefully calibrated measures of rate change provide evidence of whether transformation is progressing but equally whether the transformation path remains valid. This is important to assess and respond to with care and agility. There have been examples where the strongest advocates of transformation start to lose trust and ownership but such rates are neither measured nor acted on, with an accelerating and magnifying organization-wide detachment from the intent of the overall strategic vision.



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07

Getting Ahead of the Cascade

Running the system before committing to a cascade changes what a leadership team actually knows.

It means knowing which parts of the organization are structurally ready and which require work first. It means knowing who the real informal leaders are, so they can be recognised and equipped while there is still time to spread the load they are quietly carrying. And it means knowing which of your own strategic pillars is most exposed, before the resource behind it is committed.

The alternative carries its own cost. It means committing significant resource to a cascade designed for the organization leadership believes it has, and discovering months later that specific pockets (a geography, a function, a leadership layer) were never structurally capable of carrying it. By that point the cost is no longer diagnostic but remedial: relaunching, re-explaining, and rebuilding credibility in a process that has already, for the people living through it, failed once.

The Human Performance Operating System is delivered through five components. They function as a loop, and that is what allows the system to steer a programme instead of describing it once at the outset.

Stage	Component	The question it answers
BASELINE	<u>Organizational Performance Insight</u>	Where are we, and which of our strategic pillars is structurally exposed? Establishes Reach, Belief and Coherence against the organization's own strategic priorities.
FORECAST	<u>Transformation Predictor</u>	Where is this most likely to stall, and how soon? Identifies the points of probable failure while intervention is still cheap and before the problem is visible in performance data.
INTERVENE	<u>AI Coaching Experts</u>	How do we build informal credibility and capability at the pace and breadth the programme requires? The most common finding is that specific leaders need developing rather than reassuring, across more people than conventional coaching can reach in the time available.
ACT	Team Pinch Points	What are we going to do about it? Findings are worked through directly with the team accountable for acting on them, because a finding that stays in a report changes nothing.
RE-MEASURE	<u>Change Progress Meter</u>	Is it working? Re-measures belief and behaviour once the cascade is running, so leadership knows whether anything has genuinely moved and does not have to infer it from content metrics.

The loop then returns to forecast, with better information than it had the first time. That structure is deliberate: the systems literature is consistent that complex systems are steered through feedback rather than through plans, and an organization in the middle of a transformation is about as clear an example of a complex system as exists in commercial life.

None of this removes the difficulty of running a strategy cascade well. It removes the guesswork, which is a different and considerably more tractable problem.



LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

Action	Why it matters
<u>Commission readiness in the same planning cycle as the strategy</u>	Build it into the transformation timeline from the outset, while the design can still absorb what it finds.
Build formal redundancy around single points of informal influence	Where a small number of people carry a disproportionate share of trust, develop a wider second tier deliberately, before a departure forces the issue.
Contract for the programme, not for the report	The change between measurements is the finding that alters decisions. Commissioning a single exercise buys a position; commissioning across the programme buys a direction, and only one of those can be steered by.
Reset the operating model, then test whether the system can carry it	A target operating model that genuinely aligns governance, organization, resources and processes to the strategy is necessary, and the transition from the current model has to be planned rather than assumed. It is also not sufficient: a correctly designed structure still has to be carried by the people inside it.

Closing Reflection

No leadership team runs a strategy cascade perfectly the first time, and none should expect to.

What separates the organizations that recover quickly from those that lose a year is rarely the quality of the original strategy. It is whether anyone established, in advance, the capacity of the human system being asked to carry it, and whether leadership was prepared to act on what that measurement showed while the plan could still change.

The question is not whether your strategy is right. The question is whether you have established that the organization beneath it can carry it, and then whether you keep looking, while the answer can still change what you do. That is a knowable thing. Most organizations simply choose not to know it until the answer no longer helps.

The Evidence Base

The analysis of how strategic change moves, or fails to move, through organizational networks draws on the following research, alongside Inspirational Group's own diagnostic data from live transformation programmes.

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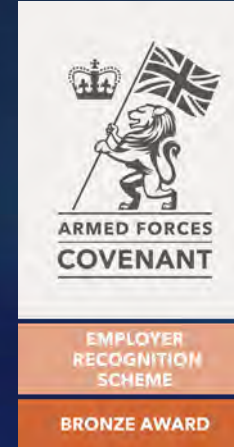
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