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Survival Guide

# The Transformation Survival Guide 2025

How to Deliver High-  
Stakes Change Without  
Stalling, Burning Out, or  
Losing Momentum

# Letter from the Authors

Dear Transformation Leader,

All shocks, impatient boards, and regulatory squeeze mean you're delivering change in the most unforgiving environment in decades. The numbers are brutal: **70%+ of major transformations** miss their goals.

The painful truth? Most programmes fail before they start because;

- teams launch before they're truly aligned
- delivery slows under politics, process, and PowerPoint
- resilience drains away long before the dashboard turns red

This guide is designed as **a field manual for executives under pressure** — drawn from six weeks of raw conversations in our Brutal Truths of Transformation webinar series, and from the scars and lessons of leaders who've delivered change in complex organisations.

Inside, you'll find:

- **9 Brutal Truths** that no executive can afford to ignore.
- **3 essential scans** to test if your organisation is strong, fragile, or at risk.

We've written it for CEOs, COOs, CIOs, and transformation leaders who don't need more frameworks, but real-world answers. The ones who need clarity, pace, and resilience — and a partner who knows how to survive transformation pressure and deliver value that endures.

I'm proud to share it with you, and grateful to the expert speakers and HiveMind community who helped shape it. I hope it helps you face the brutal truths with clarity, confidence, and resilience.



**Ben Dickie**

Co-Founder & CRO, HiveMind

On behalf of the HiveMind Network

# How to Use This Guide

## This isn't a report to skim and file.

It's a manual for leaders under pressure. Use it how you need it.

- **Only got 5 minutes?** Read the 9 Brutal Truths. They'll show you where you're most exposed.
- **Want a quick diagnostic?** Run the 3 Essential Scans. They reveal if you're strong, fragile, or at risk.
- **Need to avoid the trap?** Learn the delivery pitfalls that quietly drain belief, pace, and value.
- **Already stalling?** Jump to the 90-Day Sprint. A turnaround plan to stabilise, re-align, and prove value fast.

Use it your way. Just *don't* ignore it. Because transformation failure isn't about luck. It's about facing the brutal truths before they sink you.



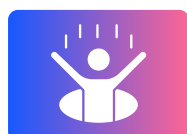
### SCANS

The scans are practical diagnostics that test for clarity, momentum, and resilience - the three essentials every transformation needs to survive.



### The Brutal Truths

Nine hard realities from real-world transformation work, with leader moves and tools to act now.



### Delivery Pitfalls

How to cut through governance theatre, avoid tech-first traps, and maintain momentum.



### The 90-Day Transformation Sprint

A starter plan to diagnose, align, and accelerate your transformation.

# The 3 Essential Scans

**Quick diagnostics to test if your organisation is clear, moving fast enough, and resilient enough to last.**

Dashboards measure cost, scope, and schedule.

They don't tell you if your transformation is truly ready, moving at the right pace, or resilient enough to survive.

That's why we built three quick scans — practical, evidence-based tests you can run today to expose hidden cracks.

## **Clarity Scan: Are We Clear?**

Do we actually agree on what's changing and what success looks like?

## **Momentum Scan: Are we moving Fast Enough?**

Do we have the pace, focus, and energy to deliver under pressure?

## **Resilience Scan: Can We Keep It Going?**

Can we sustain change long enough to lock in value?

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**Think of them as your transformation  
pressure test**

**Clarity → Momentum → Resilience.**

**Fail one, and you're already at risk.**

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# 1 Are We Clear?

Do we agree on what we're changing, and what success looks like?

## Why Clarity Matters

Most transformations that stall or fail can trace that stall back to the very beginning. Even highly capable leadership teams can fall into the same trap: assuming alignment when, in reality, each silo holds its own version of ambition and success. That misalignment doesn't look serious at the top, but it multiplies as it cascades.

Clarity of ambition isn't a nice-to-have. **It's the cost of entry.**

## Why Alignment Cracks Appear – Three Brutal Truths

### Brutal Truth #1

*You're Not as Ready as You Think You Are*

Even strong leadership teams overestimate readiness. Alignment at the top fractures down the chain.

### Brutal Truth #2

*Your Org Chart Is Lying to You*

Normal structures hide the shadow organisation the influencers and veto players.

### Brutal Truth #3

*Misalignment Compounds as It Cascades*

A small difference at the top multiplies fast. One ambition splinters into many competing versions of success.



## Our Exec Clarity Scan



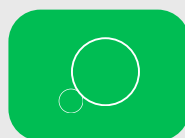
Clarity isn't a single answer — it's a system. Cracks appear when leaders pull in different directions, when ambition isn't backed by capacity, or when hidden influencers aren't engaged. Our scan explores five dimensions that expose these weak spots:



**People**



**Experience**



**Identity**



**Architecture**



**Intersection**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #1 – You may not be as ready as you think you are.

### Why it matters:

In every readiness audit we've run, leadership teams overestimate their alignment and capacity by at least two points on a 5-point scale. The confidence is understandable – you've hired smart people, you've agreed the strategy, and everyone nodded in the steering committee. But that nodding can hide hard truths:

- Assumed alignment hides cracks in ambition, scope, and purpose
- Capacity blind spots mean leaders overcommit while BAU continues unchanged.
- Sceptics and influencers have been ignored or underestimated.

### Leader's move:

- 1 Identify and engage informal influencers before launch.
- 2 Assess delivery capacity against BAU load – and cut or defer work to make space.
- 3 Test executive alignment with uncomfortable questions about priorities, trade-offs, and risk appetite.

### Reality Check – Are You Really Ready?

	Yes	Partial	No
Can every exec describe the change in the same way?	2	1	0
Do you have real capacity, or just wishful thinking?	2	1	0
Will this survive a leadership change?	2	1	0

**If these aren't clear Yes, readiness is an illusion.**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #2 – Your org chart is hiding something.

### Why it matters:

Formal reporting lines tell you who's supposed to be in charge. They don't tell you who actually controls the flow of work, resources, and decisions. Those people live in the shadow organisation – the invisible networks of influence that can make or break delivery.

- Invisible influence lives in trusted individuals outside the hierarchy.
- Resistance can organise faster than approval can.
- If you ignore the shadow organisation, it will work against you.



### Leader's move:

- 1** Engage the high-trust connectors early and visibly.
- 2** Map your informal influence networks alongside your formal structure.
- 3** Assign transformation roles to key influencers – even if they're outside the formal leadership circle.

### Reality Check – Who Really Holds the Power?

#### Ask yourself:

	Yes	Partial	No
Do we know who the trusted connectors are?	2	1	0
Have we engaged those with hidden veto power?	2	1	0
Are informal influencers part of our change design?	2	1	0

**Your shadow networks could be impacting progress**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #3 – Misalignment compounds as it cascades

### Why it matters:

What feels like a minor difference at exec level multiplies quickly as it travels down the organisation. By the time it hits the front line, one ambition has splintered into many versions of success.

- **Fragmentation spreads fast** – small cracks at the top cascade into misaligned priorities across functions and teams.
- **Energy gets wasted** – functions pull in different directions, chasing their own definitions of “winning.”
- **Delivery credibility suffers** – the organisation sees mixed messages and stops believing in the transformation.

### Leader’s move:

- 1 Surface the cracks early – use the Exec Clarity Scan to expose misalignment.**
- 2 Align the exec team on a single definition of success, supported by explicit trade-offs**
- 3 Cascade with confidence – once the top team is fully aligned and committed to the same ambition**

### Reality Check – Are We United at the Top?

#### Quick Test:

	Yes	Partial	No
Do we give consistent answers on ambition and success?	2	1	0
Have we agreed explicit trade-offs and boundaries?	2	1	0
Can our ambition be stated in one sentence we all share?	2	1	0

If not, small cracks at the top will become chaos below.

84% of leaders say  
misalignment is the  
No.1 stall point.

# 1 Are We Clear?

Do we agree on what we're changing, and what success looks like?

## Reality Check

Are you really ready?

Who really holds the power?

Are we united at the top?

### Total:

#### 15-18: Aligned

Exec team is aligned and ready



#### 9-14 Fractured

ambitions and priorities differ; cracks in alignment will multiply.



#### 0-8 Fragmented

no shared direction; readiness is an illusion.



## Exec Clarity Scan



[Take the Scan](#)

Even the strongest exec teams fall into the same trap: assuming alignment when every silo has its own definition of success. The Exec Clarity Scan is your pressure test for clarity of ambition — because without shared clarity, transformation fails before it starts.

### Why Run It?

The scan explores 5 critical dimensions — surfacing where your organisation is aligned, and where it isn't. It reveals:

- Contradictions between ambition and delivery.
- Competing definitions of success
- Invisible gaps in accountability, capability, and process.
- Risks to credibility before they derail execution.

### From Scan to Action

Running the scan is just the first step. Acting on it creates outcomes like these:

- Executives aligned on one ambition and one story the whole team owns.
- Competing priorities turned into explicit trade-offs and commitments.
- Shadow influencers surfaced and engaged before they derail delivery.
- Clear accountability and delivery ownership embedded at launch.

# 2 Are We Moving Fast Enough?

Do we have the pace, focus, and energy to deliver under pressure?

## Why Momentum Matters

Many transformations start strong but stall. Complexity, politics, and “busy dashboards” give the illusion of progress while value drifts away. A programme can survive delays, scope changes, even budget cuts – but it cannot survive the loss of belief. Momentum is what converts effort into outcomes, and when it falters, belief collapses long before the budget runs out.

**Lose momentum, and you lose belief** – the one currency you can’t buy back!

## Three Brutal Truths

### Brutal Truth #4

*People Resist Dumb Change, not Change.*

Resistance is rarely about laziness – it’s a signal that design, timing, or trust are off.

### Brutal Truth #5

*Complexity Kills Momentum*

Every additional approval, dependency, or workstream is a tax on progress. More governance ≠ more control.

### Brutal Truth #6

*Your Biggest Stall Points Aren’t on the Gantt Chart*

Dependencies, politics, and fatigue don’t show up on RAG dashboards – but they’re the fastest-growing risks.



## Our Momentum Scan

Momentum isn’t about speed alone – it’s about turning effort into impact. The Momentum Scan looks at five dimensions that reveal whether your transformation is powering forward or already slowing:



**Leadership  
Energy**



**Organisation  
Stamina**



**Decision  
Velocity**



**Narrative in  
Motion**



**Value  
Drumbeat**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #4 – People resist dumb change, not change.

### Why it matters:

“Resistance to change” is lazy thinking. It’s your early-warning system that the design is broken. What people resist is:

- Change that increases their workload without clear benefit.
- Change that feels imposed rather than co-created.
- Change that they believe won’t last.

When leaders dismiss resistance as inevitable, a goldmine of insight into where delivery will stumble is missed.

### Leader’s move:

- 1** Co-design early deliverables with the most vocal sceptics
- 2** Make the “why” clear and connect it to benefits that matter to them.
- 3** Listen for why people are pushing back – it’s usually a signal, not a problem.

### Reality Check – Are We Co-Creating or Dictating?

#### Be Honest:

	Yes	Partial	No
Are employees shaping the change, not just receiving it?	2	1	0
Is the “why” clear, visible, and consistent?	2	1	0
Do leaders at every level take ownership?	2	1	0

**If not, resistance is a signal your design is flawed.**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #5 – Complexity kills momentum.

### Why it matters:

Over-engineered delivery plans, excessive governance, and unclear priorities drain energy and slow decisions. Complexity doesn't just slow you down – it makes resilience harder to sustain because teams can't adapt under pressure.

- The more moving parts, the more fragile your momentum.
- Leaders confuse governance volume with governance quality.
- Simplification is an active choice, not a happy accident.

### Leader's move:

- 1 Strip delivery back to what's essential to prove value.
- 2 Reduce decision layers – empower teams closest to the work.
- 3 Design governance that speeds decisions rather than slows them.



### Reality Check – Is Complexity Slowing Us Down?

#### Ask yourself:

	Yes	Partial	No
Is governance speeding decisions up, or slowing them down?	2	1	0
Have we cut non-critical work to create pace?	2	1	0
Are decisions made by those closest to the work?	2	1	0

**If you can't say yes to all three, complexity is already draining your momentum.**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #6 – Your biggest stall points aren't on the Gantt chart.

### Why it matters:

Dependencies, politics, and human fatigue rarely appear on project plans. Yet they're often the fastest-growing risks in a transformation. Without a mechanism to surface and address them, you'll keep reporting "green" until it's too late.

- Stall points can form outside formal project boundaries.
- Fatigue can slow teams without any visible missed milestones.
- Politics can reverse months of progress in days.

### Leader's move:

- 1 Hold stall-point reviews separately from status updates.
- 2 Track human and political risks alongside delivery risks.
- 3 Escalate and resolve stall points as non-negotiable priorities.

### Reality Check – Do We See the Invisible Risks?

#### Test yourself:

	Yes	Partial	No
Are political and cultural blockers visible in our risk log?	2	1	0
Are we actively monitoring change fatigue across teams?	2	1	0
Do all unblocks have clear owners?	2	1	0

**If not, the risks you can't see will derail you faster than the ones you can.**

# 2 Are We Moving Fast Enough?

Do we have the pace, focus, and energy to deliver under pressure?

## Reality Check

Are We Co-Creating or Dictating?

Is Complexity Slowing Us Down?

Do We See the Invisible Risks?

## Total:

### 15-18: On Track

momentum strong, credible, delivering outcomes.



### 9-14 Slowing

pace slowing; stall points visible.



### 0-8 Stalling

activity without progress; momentum broken.



## Momentum Scan



[Take the Scan](#)

Many transformations start strong but stall fast. Governance drags, complexity multiplies, and “busy dashboards” create the illusion of progress while value slips away. The Momentum Scan pressure-tests whether your programme has the pace, focus, and credibility to keep moving under pressure.

## Why Run It?

The scan reveals whether your delivery engine is truly driving value, or just spinning wheels.

It uncovers:

- Stall points hidden outside your Gantt chart.
- Governance drag that slows decision-making.
- Cosmetic quick wins that erode credibility.
- Activity without impact, where effort isn't converting into outcomes.

## From Scan to Action

The scan shows whether progress is real or just noise. Acting on it creates outcomes like these:

- Governance redesigned to speed decisions, not slow them.
- Quick wins that build belief and advance strategic outcomes.
- A momentum dashboard that tracks value created every 90 days.

# 3 Can We Keep It Going?

Can we sustain change long enough to lock in value?

## Why Resilience Matters

What kills most transformations isn't strategy or budget — it's the slow leak of resilience. Fatigue, drift, and fragile ownership are the silent killers of transformation. Without resilience, benefits evaporate — and programmes end as stories of disappointment rather than impact.

Resilience isn't about surviving change — **it's about sustaining value long after the change is done.**

## Three Brutal Truths

### Brutal Truth #7

*The Wrong Quick Win Is Worse Than No Quick Win*

Cosmetic wins destroy credibility. Quick wins must prove outcomes, not just activity.

### Brutal Truth #8

*Resilience Is Your Most Fragile Asset*

Resilience drains silently. Once broken, it takes longer to rebuild than to lose.

### Brutal Truth #9

*You Can't Outsource Ownership*

Partners can deliver outputs, but only leaders can own outcomes.



## Our Resilience Scan

Resilience rarely breaks suddenly; it fades as fatigue, drift, and weak ownership erode belief. The Resilience Scan examines five dimensions to test whether your organisation can sustain value long after go-live:



**Insight & Understanding**



**Leadership Practices**



**Integrated Infrastructure**



**Ownership & Accountability**



**Change Resilience**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #7 – The wrong quick win is worse than no quick win.

### Why it matters:

Quick wins are meant to prove the transformation is real and achievable. A poorly chosen win can:

- Undermine credibility (“Is this really the best they could do?”)
- Distract from strategic outcomes.
- Burn political capital on low-value changes.

Momentum stalls when the wrong “win” takes the spotlight, as a bad quick win proves nothing, wastes energy, and makes people cynical.

### Leader’s move:

- 1** Select quick wins that visibly advance strategic outcomes.
- 2** Make them measurable and meaningful to stakeholders.
- 3** Use them to build belief, not just tick boxes.

### Reality Check – Are These Wins Real?

#### Quick filter:

	Yes	Partial	No
Does this win deliver measurable business value?	2	1	0
Will it build credibility and increase trust with stakeholders?	2	1	0
Does it remove barriers or accelerate the journey?	2	1	0

If you can’t say yes to at least 2/3, it’s a “wrong win”.

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #8 – Resilience is your most fragile asset.

### Why it matters:

You can have the right strategy, technology, and governance — but if your people, culture, and operating rhythms can't sustain high change load, momentum dies within months.

- Resilience depletes silently and invisibly.
- It's rarely tracked alongside cost, scope, and schedule.
- Once broken, it's slow and expensive to rebuild.

Resilience is the difference between delivering value once and sustaining it over time.

### Leader's move:

- 1** Measure resilience capacity like you measure budget burn.
- 2** Resource resilience — with time, budget, and leadership attention.
- 3** Protect it — treat it as a strategic asset, not a side-effect.

### Reality Check – Are We Protecting Resilience?

#### Ask yourself:

	Yes	Partial	No
Do we track resilience with the same rigour as cost and risk?	2	1	0
Can our people sustain the current pace for another 6–12 months?	2	1	0
Will this survive a leadership change?	2	1	0



**You could be burning through resilience faster than you can rebuild it.**

# The Brutal Truths

## Brutal Truth #9 – You can't outsource ownership.

### Why it matters:

Vendors and partners can deliver work, but they can't take accountability for outcomes, culture, or resilience. If you hand over ownership, you're handing away control of your future.

- Outsourcing delivery is not the same as outsourcing leadership.
- When ownership leaves the exec team, decisions slow and commitment weakens.
- Without internal accountability, benefits erode post-delivery.



### Leader's move:

- 1** Keep strategic and cultural ownership inside the exec team.
- 2** Treat partners as embedded co-pilots, not external fixers.
- 3** Set joint success measures that align delivery with ownership.

### Reality Check – Who Really Owns the Outcomes?

#### Quick test:

	Yes	Partial	No
Are execs accountable for outcomes, not just vendors for outputs?	2	1	0
Is ownership clear and visible at the top?	2	1	0
Are leaders actively carrying success into the organisation?	2	1	0

**If execs don't own outcomes, all you're buying is activity without impact.**

# 3 Can We Keep It Going?

Can we sustain change long enough to lock in value?

## Reality Check

Are These Wins Real?

Are We Protecting Resilience?

Who Really Owns the Outcomes?

## Total:

### 15-18: Enduring

resilience and ownership are strong; value is sustainable.



### 9-14 Draining

fatigue is visible; accountability and energy are leaking.



### 0-8 Depleted

resilience is broken; ownership has slipped, and value won't last.



## Resilience Scan



[Take the Scan](#)

The real challenge is keeping value alive once the spotlight moves on. Fatigue, drift, and fragile ownership are the silent killers of transformation. The Resilience Scan measures whether your organisation has the **stamina, adaptability, and ownership** to deliver value that lasts.

## Why Run It?

The scan highlights where resilience is draining and where you're most exposed to change fatigue. It surfaces:

- Fragile ownership where accountability slips
- Unmanaged fatigue that erodes energy and engagement
- Value starting to decay after go-live.
- Cultural blind spots undermining adaptability.

## Fram Scan to Action

"The scan shows where stamina is draining away. Acting on it creates outcomes like these:"

- Resilience treated as a measurable asset, not a hidden weakness.
- Fatigue spotted and managed before it stalls momentum.
- Benefits sustained 12-18 months beyond go-live.
- Ownership locked inside the exec team, not outsourced to vendors.

# Overall Transformation Survival Score

Transformation isn't about luck — it's about clarity, pace, and resilience.

## Reality Check

Your answers across the 9 Brutal Truths give you a score out of 54.

Your score reveals whether your organisation is built to endure — or on the edge of breaking down.

ARE WE CLEAR?

ARE WE MOVING FAST ENOUGH?

CAN WE KEEP IT GOING?

## Total:

### Unstoppable (45–54)

Your transformation is built to deliver lasting value. Keep investing in pace, resilience, and ownership

### Vulnerable (28–44)

cracks are showing. Momentum, resilience, or alignment is exposed, and survival is possible but not guaranteed Without decisive action

### Collapsing (0–27)

Resilience is broken, ownership has slipped, and value is draining away. Urgent reset required before the transformation fails completely.

## Next Steps...

### DON'T WAIT

IF YOUR SCORE IS RED OR AMBER

### RUN THE SCANS

HIGHLIGHTING ACTIONABLE AREAS

### 90 DAY TRANSFORMATION SPRINT

REMEDYING YOUR CHALLENGES

# The 90-Day Transformation Sprint / Turnaround Plan

Sometimes you can see the stall coming. Sometimes you wake up in the middle of it. Either way, the clock is ticking.

A 90-Day Transformation Sprint is about stabilising, re-aligning, and accelerating delivery so momentum — and value — are recovered fast.

## Day 0 – 30

### READINESS REALITY CHECK

ALIGNMENT, DELIVERY CAPACITY, AND OSCR HEALTH.

### STALL-POINT MAPPING

IDENTIFY POLITICAL, STRUCTURAL, AND TECHNICAL BLOCKERS.

### INFLUENCE NETWORK MAPPING

ALIGNMENT, DELIVERY CAPACITY, AND OSCR HEALTH.

## Day 31 – 60

### QUICK-WIN IDENTIFICATION

SELECT 2–3 HIGH-IMPACT, CONFIDENCE-BUILDING WINS.

### OUTCOME RESET

REFRAME PROGRAMME KPIS TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES.

### EXECUTIVE ALIGNMENT SPRINT

GET TOP LEADERS ON THE SAME PAGE ABOUT PURPOSE, PRIORITIES, AND TRADE-OFFS.

## Day 61 – 90

### DELIVER QUICK WINS

PROVE PROGRESS AND BUILD CONFIDENCE.

### RESILIENCE ROUTINES

WEEKLY PULSE CHECKS, FATIGUE MONITORING, OSCR EMBEDDING.

### GOVERNANCE REFRESH

FASTER DECISION CYCLES, FEWER APPROVAL BOTTLENECKS.

# With thanks to our contributors

This Transformation Survival Guide would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our HiveMind Network members. Each of them has shared their experience, insight, and perspective through our webinar series, and in doing so have helped shape the collective wisdom that underpins this guide.



**Catherine Hayes**

Catherine is an organisational sustainability and change-resilience specialist and principal of her own consultancy, where she partners with enterprise leaders to navigate complex transitions and deliver measurable results.



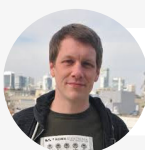
**Indra Books**

Indra Books is a transformational leadership expert with over 30 years of global experience across 46 countries, helping organisations turn fractured teams into high-performing powerhouses.



**Barry Flack**

Barry Flack is a Fractional HR Executive who partners with ambitious SME CEOs to turn people strategy into a catalyst for sustainable growth, improved profitability, and market resilience.



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Milan co-founded Intersection Group, Enterprise Design Associates, and Teamenu, a digital-workplace SaaS business. With over a decade of entrepreneurial innovation—from launching a social-software startup and designing a patented commercial flight-deck system.



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David Higgins is a Transformation Director at I&D who helps organisations in the UK and globally grow rapidly with agility and deliver lasting change. Outcomes-driven and hands-on, he aligns strategic intent with customer loyalty and colleague engagement.



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Ben is a transformation strategist and the Chief Revenue Officer at HiveMind Network, where he helps enterprise leaders unlock growth and deliver meaningful change through high performance transformation initiatives.

**If the stakes are high,  
the risk is real, and  
time is short — you  
don't need another  
report. You need a  
partner who's been  
here before.**



Clarity Scan



Momentum Scan



Resilience Scan



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