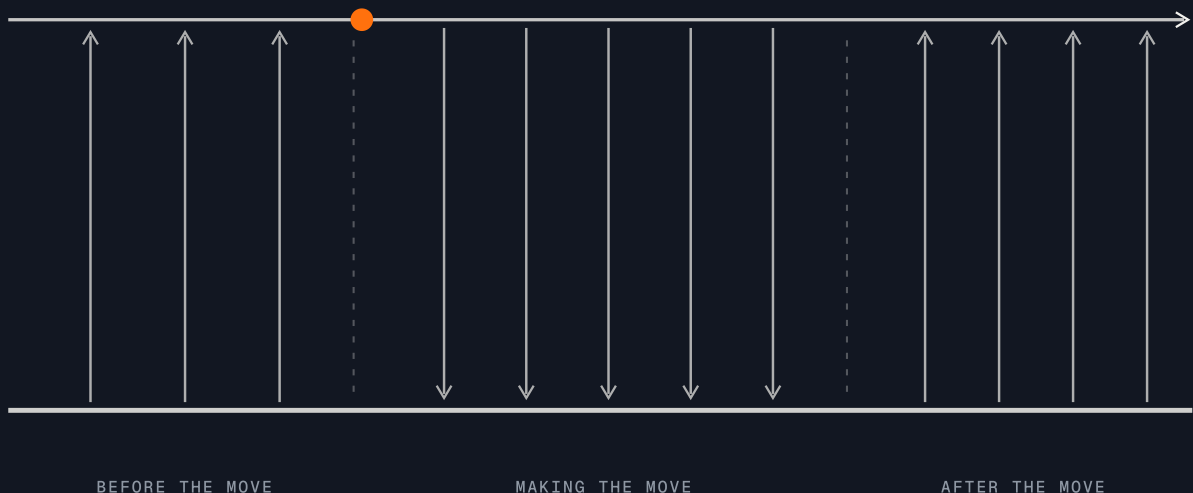




Before the Move

What Growth Asks of a Company, Move by Move



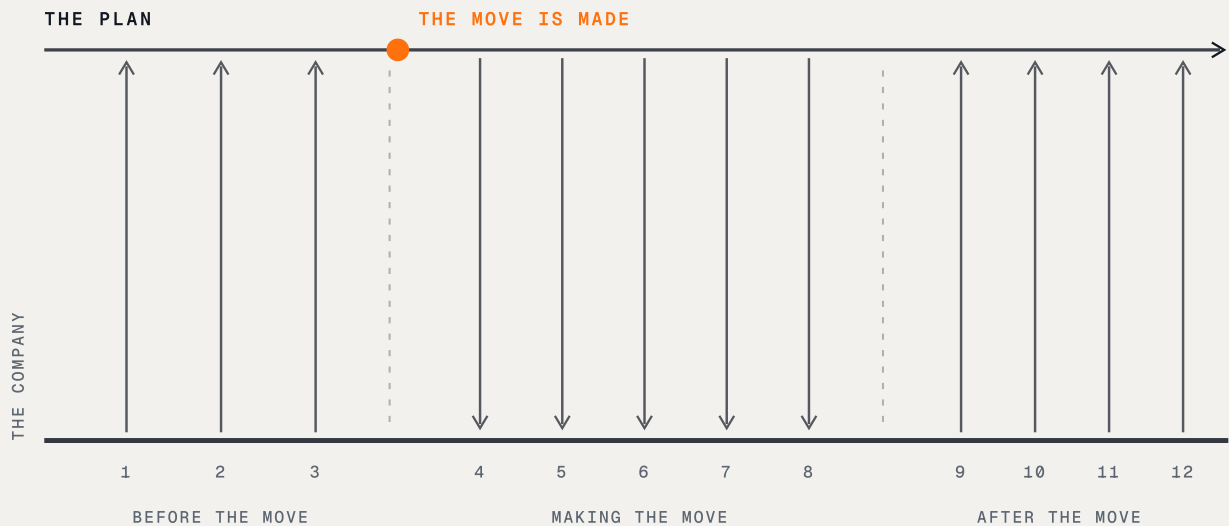
A growth plan is made of moves: a new market, a new product, a company bought, something stopped. The company chooses the move. This paper looks at the other half: what each kind of move asks of the company making it, before the move, while it is made, and after.

THE TWELVE CONDITIONS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | A core that runs without the people the move will take |
| 2 | An advantage the company can repeat |
| 3 | A home position that holds while attention moves |
| 4 | Moving next door, or far away |
| 5 | Bringing an advantage in |
| 6 | Moving with a shift in the market |
| 7 | Buying a company |
| 8 | Stopping something |
| 9 | Decisions made from data |
| 10 | Delivery the company can rely on |
| 11 | Improvement as a habit |
| 12 | A rhythm for reviewing direction |

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- | | |
|----|---|
| 01 | A plan is made of moves. The company chooses them. Each one asks something of the company. |
| 02 | The direction can be right and the move still too early. Many plans that struggle chose well, then moved before the company was ready. |
| 03 | Every move takes from the core. The core has to keep running when attention, people and money move away. |
| 04 | The more a move reuses, the more the work is change. The less it reuses, the more must be built. |
| 05 | Buying a company means buying its structure. Its gaps come with its revenue. |
| 06 | Stopping something is a move too. It frees what the plan needs. |
| 07 | The plan owns the order. When a window forces the pace, the company can still decide to move, knowing exactly what is not ready and what that risks. |



01

A plan is made of moves

Most growth plans can be read as a set of moves. Open a second site. Enter a new country. Launch a new product line. Buy a competitor. Close a business that no longer earns its place. Each move is a decision about where the company goes next.

Choosing the move is strategy, and it belongs to the company: its owners, its board, and the people they trust to decide. This paper does not tell anyone which move to make.

It looks at something that is easier to miss. Many plans that struggle chose a sound direction. What hurt them was a move the company was not yet ready to make: a new market entered while the home operation still needed the founder every day, a company bought before the buyer's own way of deciding could take in a second company, a new product launched before the first one ran without constant attention.

The direction can be right, and the move can still come too early for the company making it.

Every move takes something from the company: attention, people, money and time. And every move asks something of it: a way of working that travels, a decision structure that holds across a larger company, an advantage that does not depend on one person. Those are what this paper is about.

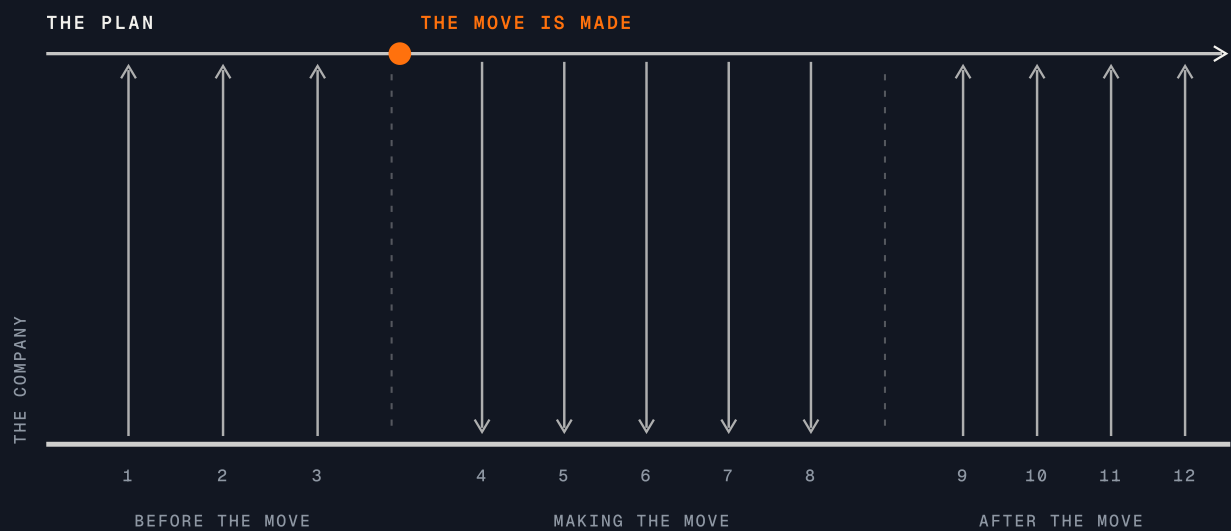
02

The plan names the move. The move sets the test.

This paper looks at twelve operating conditions around a move: what has to hold before it, what different moves ask while they are being made, and what has to exist afterwards. They are not laws, and they are not a fixed model for examining every company. Not every plan involves all of them. The plan decides which apply, how much each matters, and in what order.

What stays the same is the direction of the question. FEC does not ask whether a move is the right strategy. It asks what the move asks of the company, and whether the company can do it.

Two companion papers look at the company from other sides: Built to Carry, on six parts of a company that growth often puts weight on, and Built in the Wrong Order, on why companies build what they can see first. [READ BUILT IN THE WRONG ORDER](#) · [FORNAXEC.COM/INSIGHTS](#)



A plan read as a move. Before it, three conditions have to keep holding. While it is made, different kinds of move ask different things. After it, four things have to exist for the new state to hold. Illustrative: the plan decides which apply.

03

Before the move: what has to keep holding

Every move takes attention, people and money away from the core of the business: the work that brings in most of the revenue and trust today. These three ask whether the core keeps running when that happens.

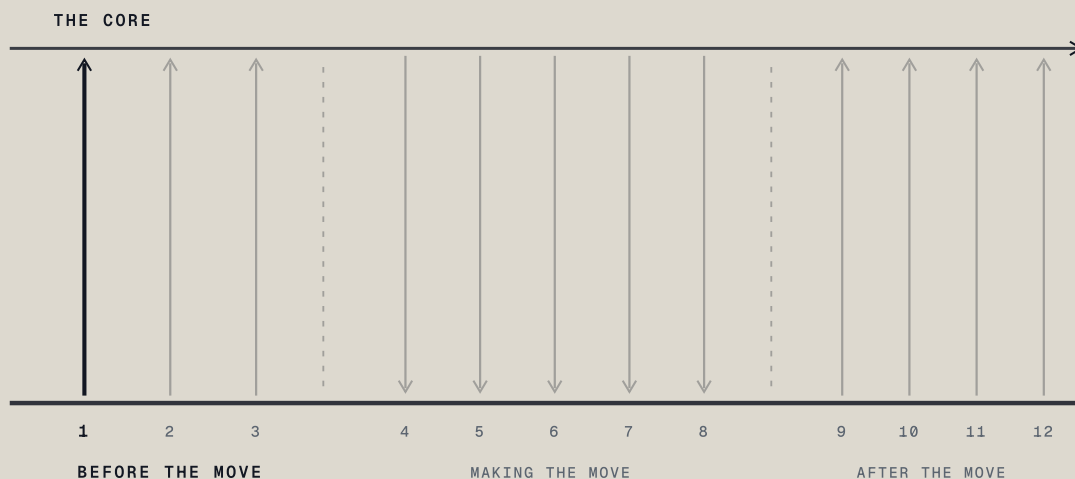
1

CONDITION 1 / 12

A core that runs without the people the move will take

WHAT IT IS

The core is the product, service or way of serving customers that brings in most of the revenue and trust. A core that holds stays profitable, keeps its customers and keeps its standard, without the founder or a few key people stepping in every day.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A move needs leaders, and it usually takes them from the core. The core has to keep running at its standard when those people's attention moves to the new thing.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Major customers deal only with the founder. Delivery holds together because one person knows how. The product works for today's customers, but has never been tested at twice the volume.

CHANGE OR BUILD

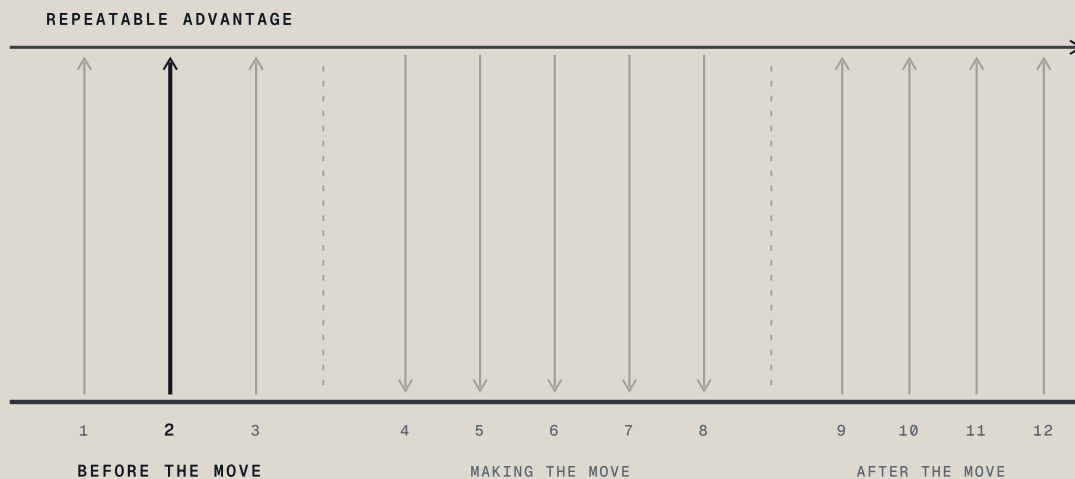
Usually change: hand customer relationships and delivery to roles and written ways of working, so the core no longer depends on the people the move needs.

CONDITION 2 / 12

2 An advantage the company can repeat

WHAT IT IS

The reason the best customers choose the company, made into something the company produces every time, not something a few people produce when they are available.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A move stretches the people who hold the advantage across more customers, more sites or more markets. If the advantage lives in them, it thins as they stretch. It has to be built into how the company works, so it survives the stretch.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Customers ask for particular people by name. Quality depends on who is working that day. New staff take a long time to deliver what the company is known for.

CHANGE OR BUILD

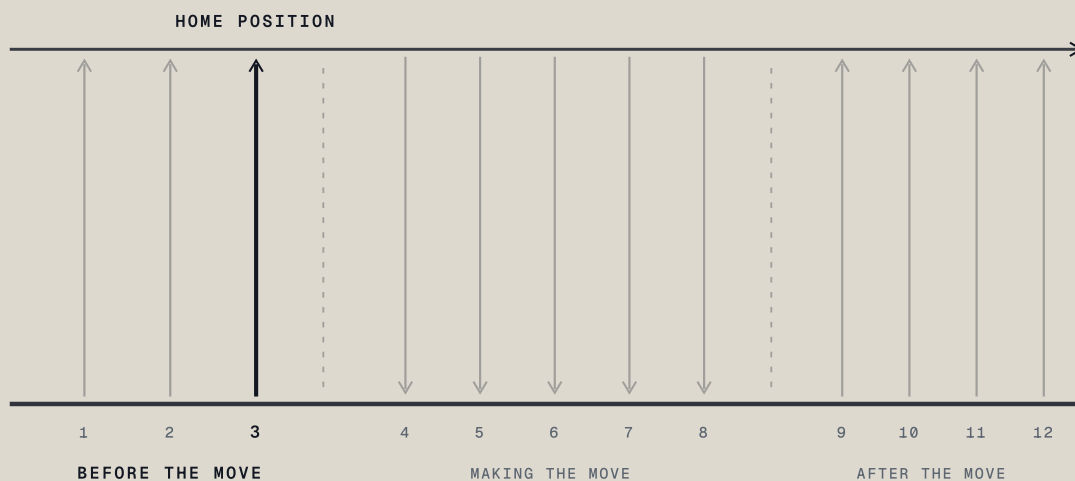
Often build: the standards, training and systems that turn one person's skill into the company's way of working.

CONDITION 3 / 12

3 A home position that holds while attention moves

WHAT IT IS

The company's place in its current market: its customers, its reputation, its standing against competitors, and an operation there that runs without the founder's daily presence.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A new market is a second front, run with leadership time that was already fully used by the first. The home market has to hold its ground while attention is elsewhere, and what works there has to be clear enough to repeat somewhere new.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Performance at home still depends on the people who would lead the move. When their attention moves elsewhere, decisions slow, customer relationships weaken or standards fall. The home operation still needs the founder every day.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Change at home first, so it runs without the founder. Build the version of the model that can be repeated in the new market.

Moves differ in what they ask. Some reuse what the company already has. Some ask for things it has never needed. These five are common kinds of move.

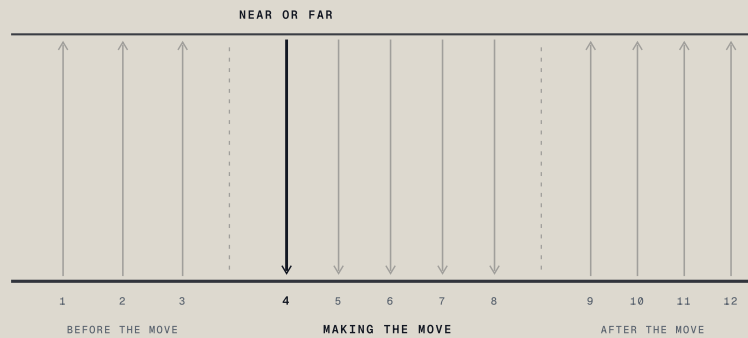
4

CONDITION 4 / 12

Moving next door, or far away

WHAT IT IS

A move next door uses what the company already does well: related customers, related products, the same kind of work. A move far away needs a different way of operating or different skills, or serves a different need.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

The more a move can reuse what already works, the more the work is likely to be change. The less it can reuse, the more the company will have to build, often while the original business still needs the same leadership time.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

The move feels familiar but needs skills the company does not have at the standard required. Two different ways of operating are being run by a team sized for one.

CHANGE OR BUILD

The more the move reuses, the more likely change. The less it reuses, the more must be built, and the plan should say so openly.

FROM THE WORK

A leisure operator was preparing to open a much larger second park on a new site. The move itself was not the problem. The way the first park was run could not simply be stretched over the second. The new park needed its own way of being run: its own areas and supervisors, staff planned around its busy times, a safety system, and a chain of command that worked without the founder there.

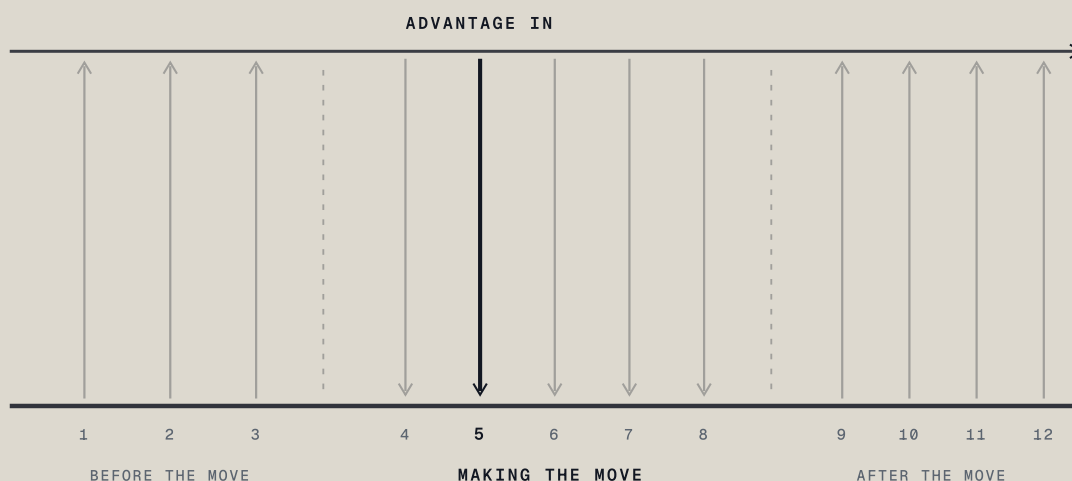
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CONDITION 5 / 12

5 Bringing an advantage in

WHAT IT IS

The specific advantage the company takes into a new place: customer relationships, knowledge of the work, supplier networks, or a name people already know there.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

That the advantage can be named precisely. Moving next door is a direction; an advantage is a specific asset. If the company cannot say what it brings in, the move is closer to starting a new business, with the cost of running the existing one at the same time.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

The case for the move rests on familiarity rather than on a named advantage. Competitors already in the new place have relationships and knowledge the company does not.

CHANGE OR BUILD

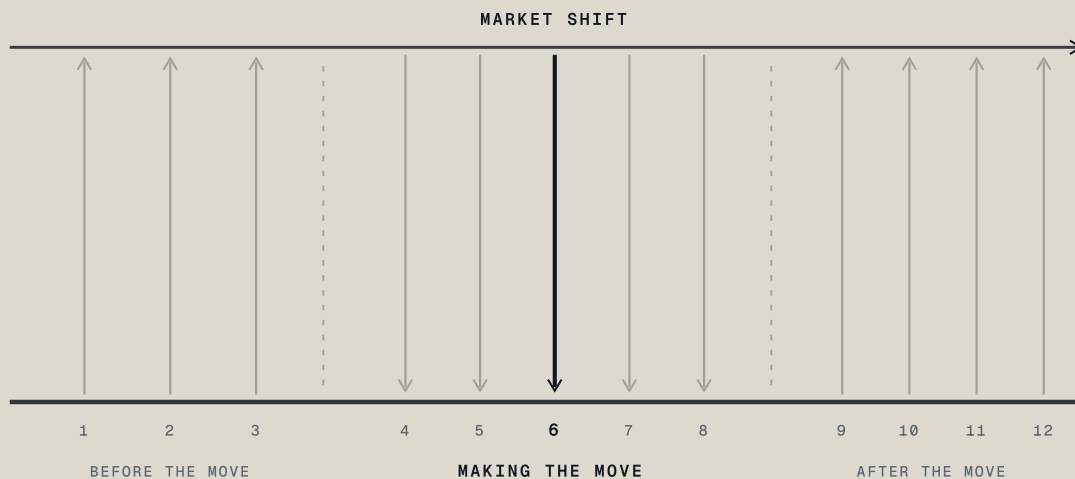
Where an advantage transfers, change: adapt it to the new place. Where none does, the move asks for more to be built, much as a new business would.

CONDITION 6 / 12

6 Moving with a shift in the market

WHAT IT IS

Markets move with larger forces: new technology, new rules, changes in who the customers are, competitors joining together. Some shifts are well established. Others are still a guess.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A way of reading those shifts, telling the established ones from the guesses, and deciding in time. That way of deciding is something the company has to be able to do, not a report it reads.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

A shift has been noticed and discussed for a long time, but nothing decides whether to act on it. Decisions wait for more certainty while competitors move.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Usually build: a regular way of watching the market, testing what is established, and deciding.

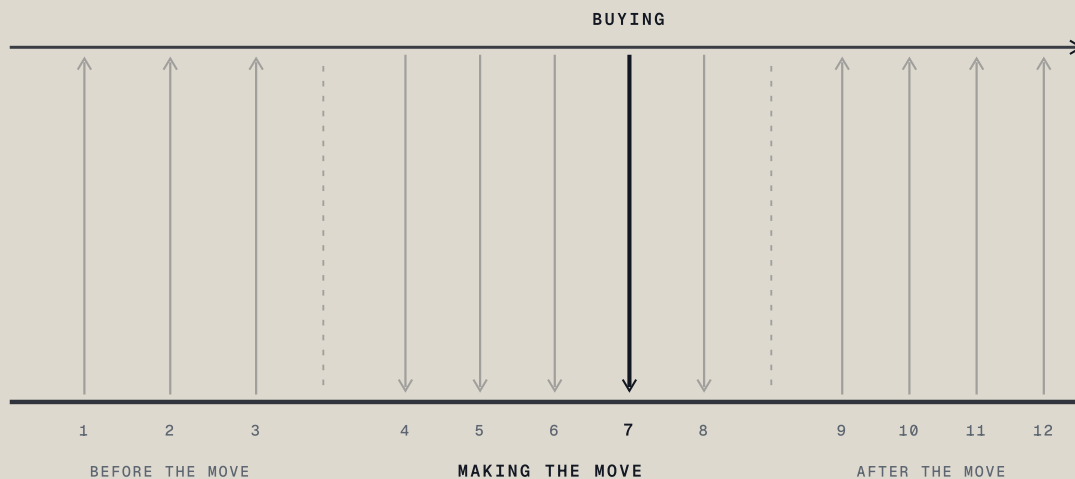
7

CONDITION 7 / 12

Buying a company

WHAT IT IS

Adding a business by buying it: its customers, its abilities, its people and its revenue.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A company is bought with its structure and its gaps: how it works, who holds its knowledge, how it decides, and which customers it depends on. The buyer's own way of deciding and working has to be able to take in a second company, and the plan for joining the two has to exist before signing, not after.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

The case for buying rests on revenue and market position, and little has been looked at inside. Nobody has written down how the two companies will run as one. The buyer's own decision structure already strains at its current size.

CHANGE OR BUILD

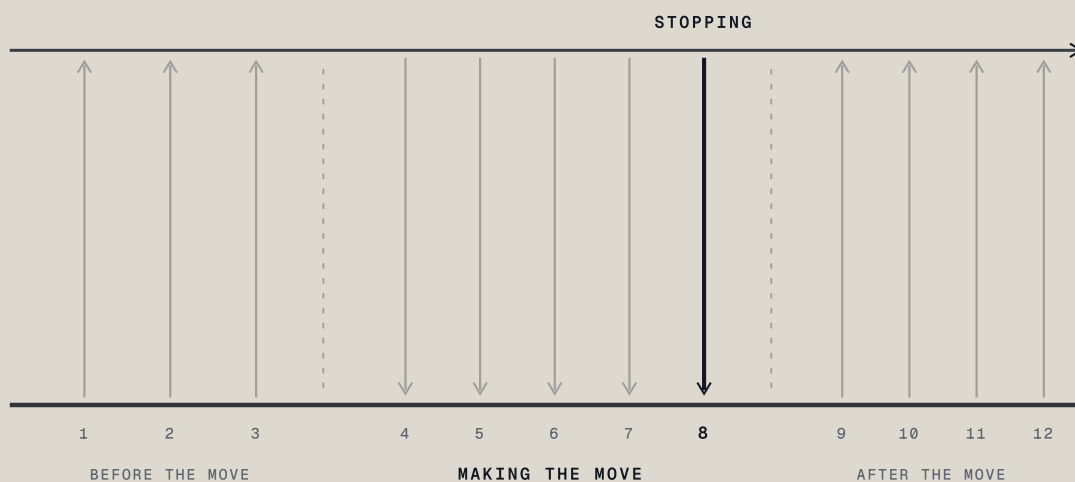
Usually both: change the buyer's decision structure so it works across two companies, and build the plan and the team for bringing them together.

CONDITION 8 / 12

8 Stopping something

WHAT IT IS

Closing a product, a division, a customer relationship or an initiative that no longer earns its place.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

Stopping is a move too. It asks for a way to decide what to stop, against a clear standard, and a way to release the people, money and attention it held to where the plan needs them.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Something keeps getting resources long after anyone expects it to recover. Stopping it is avoided because it would mean admitting that an earlier decision did not work.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Usually build: a regular review that asks what each part of the company adds, and the authority to act on the answer.

05

After the move: what has to exist for the new state to hold

A move made is not yet a move that holds. These four keep a company working well once a move is under way, whatever the move was. Some of them also appear in Built in the Wrong Order, seen there as parts of the company. Here they are seen from the move.

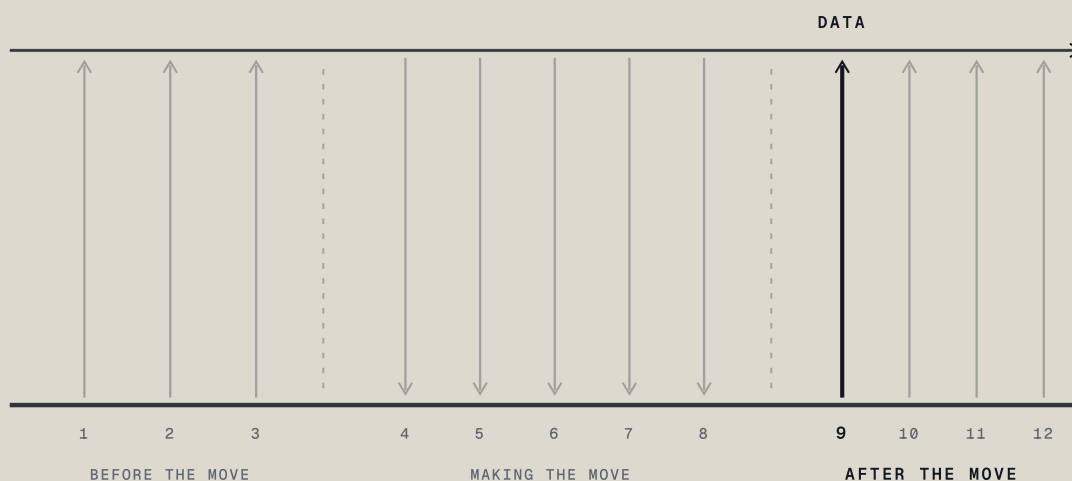
9

CONDITION 9 / 12

Decisions made from data

WHAT IT IS

One current view of sales, money, operations and customers, kept clean, and the ability to turn it into understanding.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

After a move, the company is larger than anyone can see directly. Decisions about the move have to be made from what is actually happening, not from impressions.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Leaders learn how the move is going from conversations rather than numbers. Figures from different systems disagree. Problems with the move are found after they have grown.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Often build: joined-up data for the new part of the company from its first day, not added later.

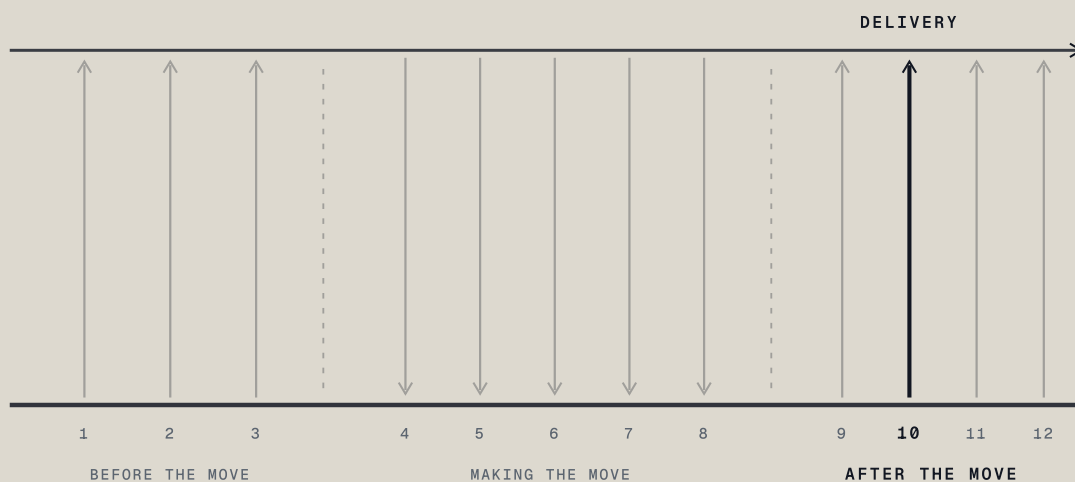
10

CONDITION 10 / 12

Delivery the company can rely on

WHAT IT IS

Clear standards for what "delivered" means, by when, and who is accountable, with a way of seeing whether it happens.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

A move adds commitments. Reliability has to come from how the work is set up, not from extra effort. A company that delivers steadily at a sensible standard usually does better than one that aims higher and delivers unevenly.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Deadlines slip a little, often. Commitments made for the move are met by heroic effort. Customers notice the unreliability before the company does.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Usually change: set the standards and the checks, then hold to them.

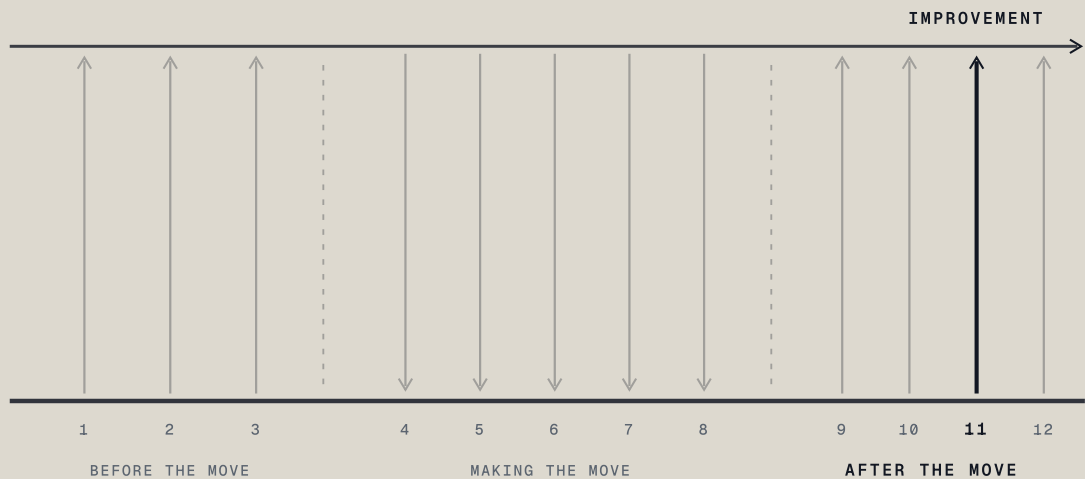
11

CONDITION 11 / 12

Improvement as a habit

WHAT IT IS

A regular way of finding what could work better, in systems, processes, products and the customer's experience, and of acting on it.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

The ways of working that suited the company before the move were designed for a smaller or simpler company. After the move they need updating, and then updating again.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

The systems are still the ones designed for an earlier size. Ideas for improvement are welcomed, but nothing happens to them. The same complaints keep coming back.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Build: a set way for improvements to be raised, chosen and made, with someone responsible for it.

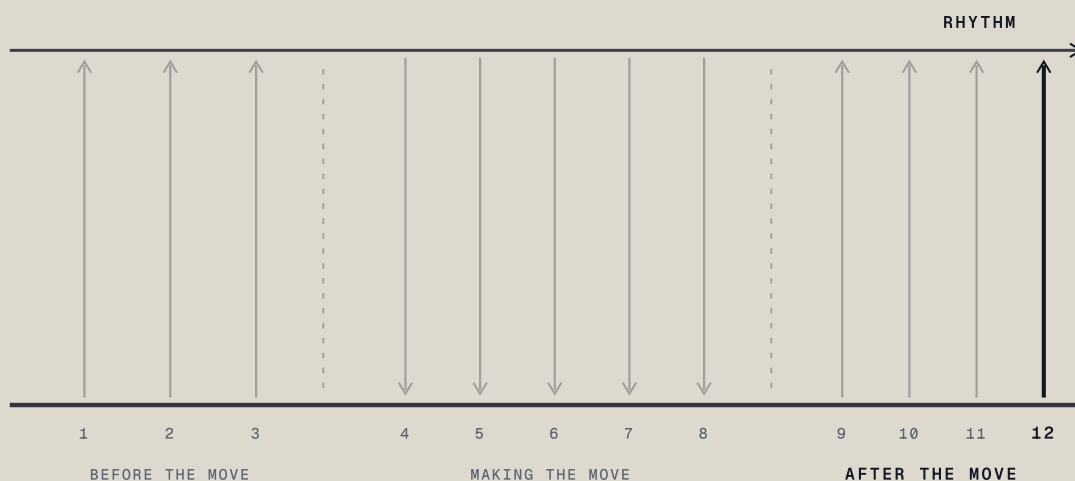
12

CONDITION 12 / 12

A rhythm for reviewing direction

WHAT IT IS

A defined rhythm for reviewing delivery, performance, money, risk and direction. Different questions are reviewed at different intervals, depending on how quickly they can change and how much they matter to the move: some weekly, some monthly, some once a quarter or once a year. Each review has a clear purpose, the right people and the authority to decide.



WHAT IT ASKS OF THE COMPANY

Once a move is under way, decisions are made faster than anyone reviews them. A rhythm stops the company drifting into the next move before the current one works, and catches decisions that pull against each other.

SIGNS IT IS NOT READY YET

Decisions made between reviews cannot be undone by the time they are reviewed. Different parts of the company act on different priorities. The next move is being planned before the last one is stable.

CHANGE OR BUILD

Often build: the reviews, what each one covers, and who decides in them.

06

Order matters, and the plan owns it

There is an order that often works: make sure the core holds, then make the move, then build what keeps it going. A step taken out of that order usually costs more than the step itself, because every later move is built on top of it. A move made from a core that still depends on the founder takes that dependence into every new market. A company bought before the buyer's own decisions are sound brings the strain into both companies at once.

But that order is not a rule for every company. Sometimes a window closes faster than any company could prepare: a licence that will not be offered again, a competitor about to move first, a market open for a limited time. Waiting for everything to be ready would mean missing the move.

Sometimes a company decides that the window matters more than being fully ready. Then the question changes. The company should know exactly what is not ready, what risk that creates, what has to be built while the move is under way, and what would cause the move to be stopped or reconsidered.

FEC can make that operating reality clear. The company decides whether the opportunity justifies going ahead anyway.

The plan decides the order. The company should know what a move will ask of it before the move is made.

07

Read from where you sit

Owners and boards. When a move comes to you for approval, the strategy is only half the question. The other half is what the move will take from the core and what it will ask of the company, and whether those are ready.

Investors. A growth plan is usually a series of moves. Ask which move comes first, what it takes from the core, and whether the company can make it before the next one is funded.

Holding companies. Moves inside a group often draw on the same leaders and shared services. Two companies making moves at the same time can each look ready on their own, and still compete for the same people.

The people running the company. The move is usually decided above you. What it asks of the company is usually delivered by you. Naming those asks early is how you avoid handling them alone.

08

The question underneath

Every growth plan comes with a question that is rarely asked out loud. FEC asks it of every company it works with:

What does this company need to become to execute its next stage, grow stronger, and create more value through it?

Three questions answer it:

01

Can the company carry the plan?

02

What needs to change or be built?

03

How does the company become stronger through it?

For a plan made of moves, much of the answer is often found here: in what each move takes from the company, and what it asks of it. The plan still decides where to look. The answer to the first question is an operating judgment. The company keeps the decision.

OPERATING JUDGMENT

PROCEED

PROCEED AFTER CHANGES

DO NOT PROCEED

When the work is done, what matters is what stays inside the company.

The intervention ends. The operating state remains.

What does this company need to become to
execute its next stage, grow stronger, and create
more value through it?

Bring us the plan.

Tell us what the company is trying to do next. Every review is handled in confidence.

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