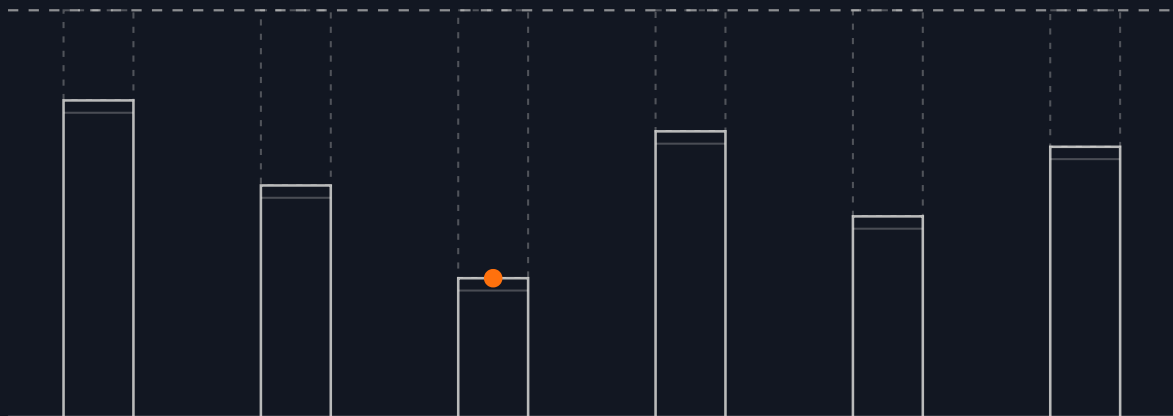




Built to Carry

The Six Pillars Under a Growth Plan

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



Growth tends to put weight on the same six parts of a company. The plan still decides which of them matter, and how strong each one has to be. This paper explains the six, how to tell when one is missing, and why having a pillar on paper is not the same as having it hold.

THE SIX PILLARS

- 1

How the work runs

SYSTEMS AND WORKFLOWS
- 2

Seeing the company as it is

DASHBOARDS AND VISIBILITY
- 3

Who decides what

ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- 4

One set of records

TOOLS AND INTEGRATION
- 5

Fixing at the source

FEEDBACK AND CORRECTION
- 6

Discipline that holds

EXECUTION DISCIPLINE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 01

Growth finds what is already there, and asks for what is not. Some gaps were hidden by today's size. Others are new needs the company never had before.
- 02

The plan sets the standard. A company can be ready for one plan and not for another.
- 03

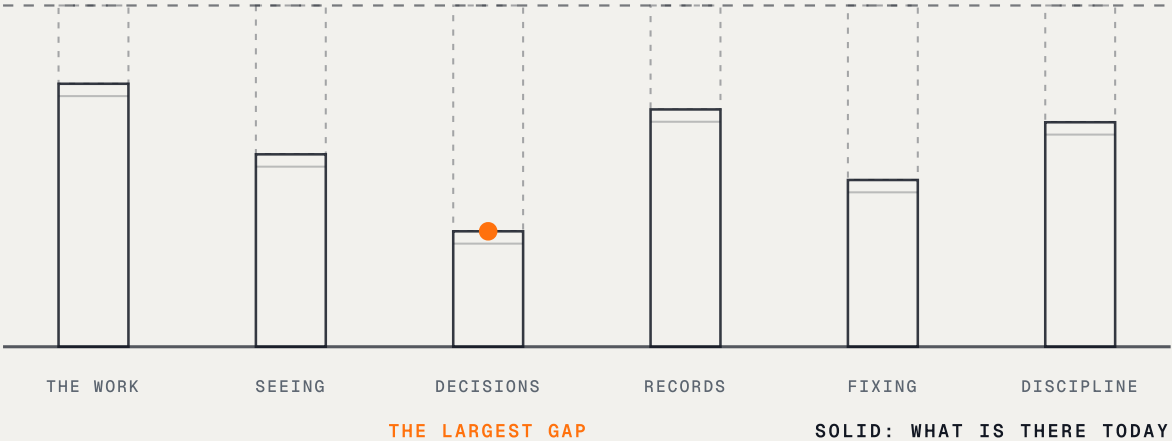
Six parts often take the load. How the work runs. Seeing the company as it is. Who decides what. One set of records. Fixing at the source. Discipline that holds.
- 04

On paper is not the same as under load. A pillar counts only if it holds on the busiest day.
- 05

The pillars lean on each other. Strengthening one alone can make things worse.
- 06

Look before the plan moves. A gap closed before the commitment is a project. After it, the gap competes with delivery.

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



Growth finds what is already there

Many companies that struggle when they grow were not broken by the growth. The trouble was already there. Growth made it impossible to ignore.

It was there in the process that only works because the same three people run it. In the decision that always ends up on the founder's desk, because nobody else has the authority to make it. In the safety check that gets done because someone remembered, not because anything made sure. In the stock ordered by habit instead of from records.

When a company is small, these gaps are covered. People sit close together, work hard and remember. Then growth arrives: new staff who never learned the habits, new customers who do not fit the informal way of doing things, more work than an unwritten process can take. What held at twenty customers breaks at two hundred. What held with ten staff breaks with fifty.

Growth exposes what today's scale allowed the company to get away with.

Sometimes nothing was breaking at all. The next stage simply asks for something the company never needed before: a new kind of role, a new system, a way of working that did not exist. That gap is not a weakness to fix. It is something to build.

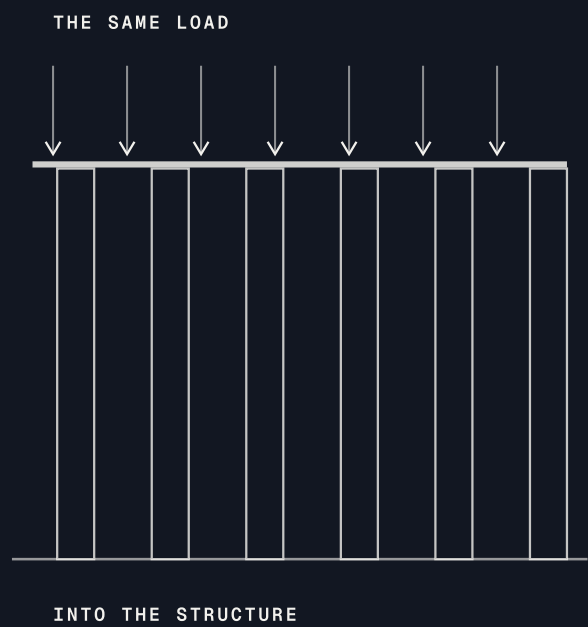
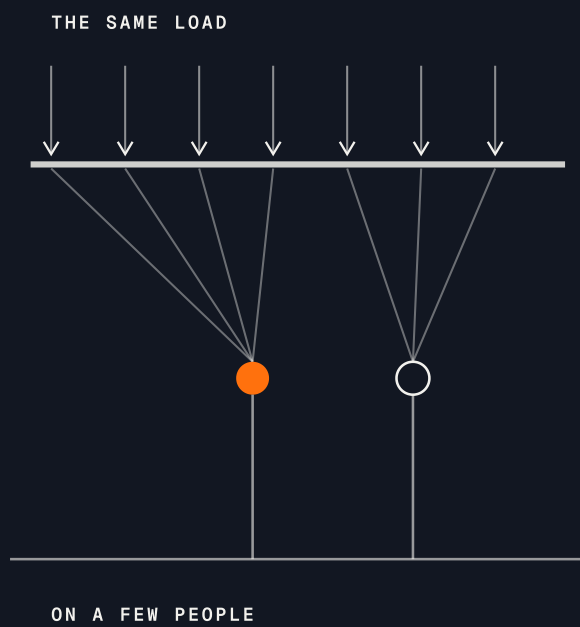
What is usually missing is the layer between strategy and daily work: written ways of working, clear decision rights, a way to see problems early, a way to fix them at the source, and the habit of following all of it. Without that layer, a company runs because particular people force it to run, every day, at a personal cost. That constant tiredness is not a leadership problem. It is a sign of how the company is built.

WHERE THE LOAD LANDS

You can see the difference from how a company behaves under more work.

WHEN THE LOAD LANDS ON PEOPLE	WHEN THE LOAD LANDS ON THE COMPANY
Delays grow every time the work grows	Extra work runs through set ways of working
Staff are always at or over their limit	Each role has a clear load and the support to handle it
Problems are found after the damage is done	Problems show up early, while they are still cheap to fix
Decisions end up with the founder, because nobody else can make them	Decisions are made at the level they belong to
New hires add more coordination	New hires learn written ways of working from their first day
Growth adds confusion as fast as it adds revenue	Growth is taken in by the company's structure
The company runs because people push it	The company runs because it was built to
Little works when the founder is away	The founder's absence changes little day to day

The difference between the two columns is not how good the managers are. It is how the company is built.



The same load arriving at two companies. In one, it passes to a few people. In the other, it passes into the structure.

The plan sets the standard

There is no single standard of "ready". A pillar that is strong enough for today can be far too weak for what comes next, and what comes next depends on the plan.

A second site needs ways of working that travel without the people who wrote them. A new sales channel needs records that show every customer and every deal. An acquisition needs decision rights that still hold when two companies become one. A sharp rise in volume needs work that moves without waiting on one person.

So the same company can be ready for one plan and not for another. That is why the right place to start is not a checklist. It is the plan: what the company is trying to do next, by when, and what has already been committed. The plan sets how strong each pillar has to be.

The six in this paper are not a fixed model for examining every company. They are parts of a company that growth often puts under pressure. A succession, an acquisition or a change in the rules can put weight on parts this list does not name. The plan still decides what matters, what has to be examined, and how strong each part needs to be.

1

PILLAR 1 / 6

How the work runs

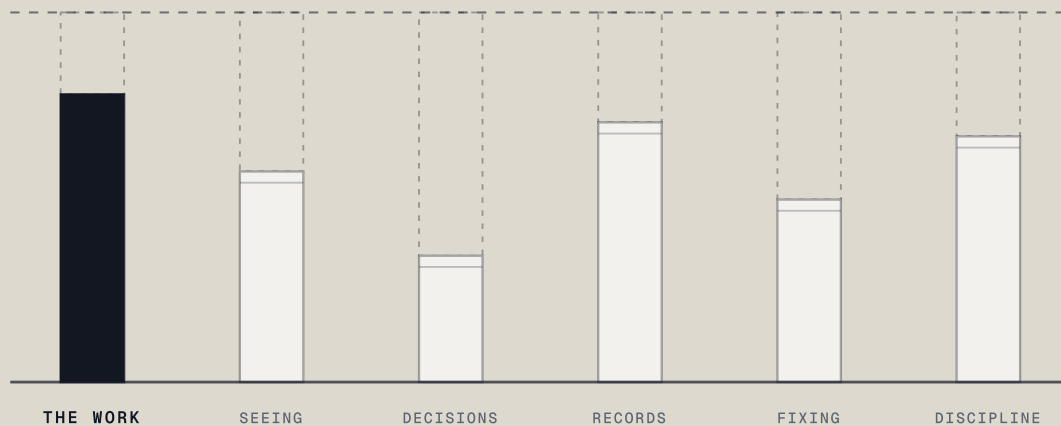
SYSTEMS AND WORKFLOWS

WHAT IT IS

Every piece of work that brings in revenue, serves customers or moves between teams follows a written, repeatable way of working that gives the same result whoever does it. It has three parts: clear steps, so nobody has to guess; steps that run by themselves where they should; and a set route for raising a problem when something goes wrong, so it does not disappear in silence.

A written process can be handed over. A habit leaves with the person who has it.

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

More people, more places and more volume. The way of working has to hold for people who were never shown it.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

The work depends on the memory of whoever is doing it. New hires copy the person next to them. Customers get a different result depending on who served them. When an experienced person leaves, part of the work stops.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

A process manual is not a process. If the written steps are not what people actually do on a busy day, the pillar exists only on paper.

2

Pillar 2 / 6

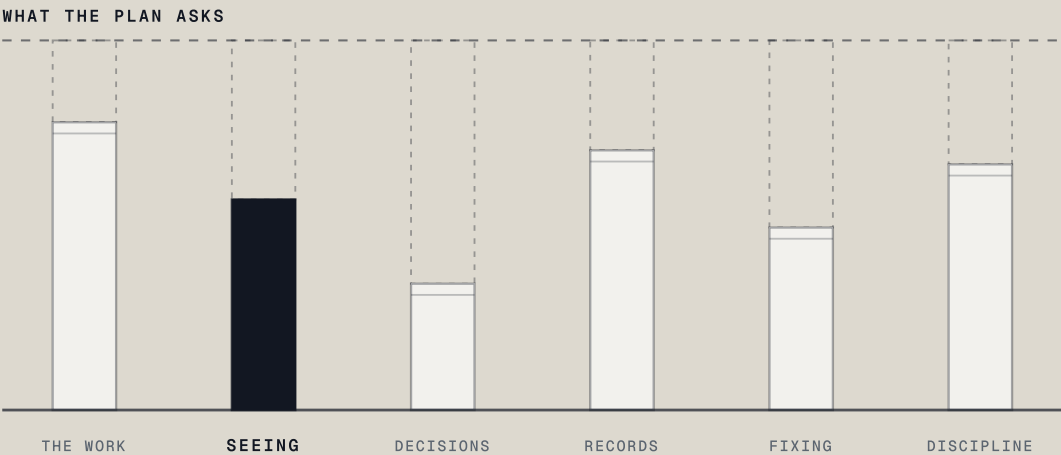
Seeing the company as it is

Dashboards and Visibility

WHAT IT IS

Leaders can see the real state of the work as it happens: how it is performing, how much is waiting, and where it is failing. Alerts show when something starts to slip, and the numbers are good enough to make decisions from.

Reports show what happened. A live view shows what is happening. The gap between the two is the gap between a problem you manage and an emergency you react to.



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

More work, in more places, than any one person can watch.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

Problems are found through customer complaints. A pile of waiting work grows that nobody has counted. A key person is close to breaking while still looking fine. The numbers arrive weeks after the fact.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

A dashboard nobody acts on is decoration. Visibility counts only when each number has an owner and something happens when it moves.

3

Pillar 3 / 6

Who decides what

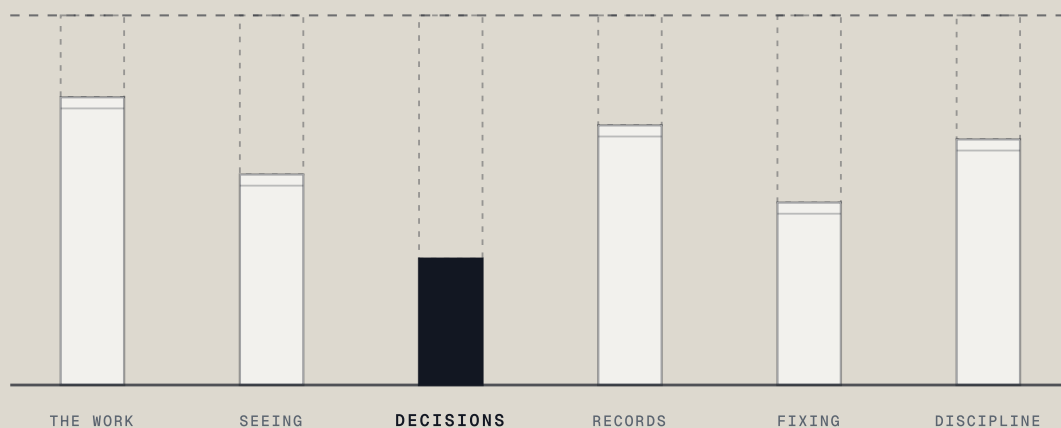
ROLES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

WHAT IT IS

Every role has a written scope, the decisions it can make on its own, and a route for passing problems up. Every result has one owner. Everyday decisions are made at the level they belong to, not on the founder's desk by default.

When ownership is unclear, work belongs to everyone, and so to no one. A capable team inside an unclear structure still produces poor results.

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

More decisions every day than one person can make. If decisions still go to the founder, the founder's day becomes the limit of the whole company.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

Problems reach your desk that someone below you should have solved. Work you hand over comes back to you. Two people think they own the same result, or nobody does.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

An organisation chart is not a decision structure. If managers still wait for the founder's approval when it matters, the authority written down was never handed over.

EXAMPLE

In a real estate group FEC worked with, most decisions still went through the founder. The company set up a chain of Chief Executive, General Manager, Department Heads and Teams, and told each level in writing what it could decide by itself.

READ THE CASE · [FORNAMEC.COM/CASE-STUDIES](https://fornamec.com/case-studies)

4

PILLAR 4 / 6

One set of records

TOOLS AND INTEGRATION

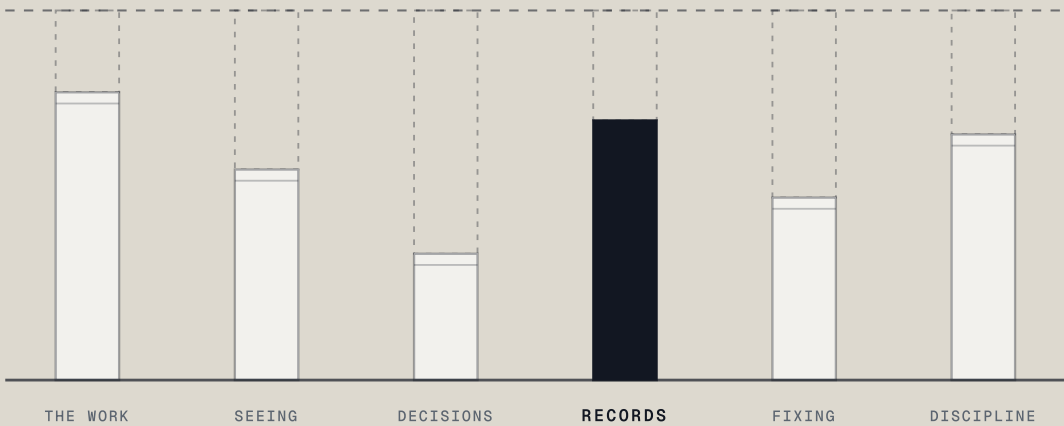
WHAT IT IS

The company works from one source of truth that everyone who needs it can reach. Its tools are connected, so nobody has to type the same information twice. It uses as many tools as it can actually run well, and no more.

A company with its sales in one system, its customers in another, its projects in a third and its money in a fourth has four versions of the truth. Someone has to match them by hand, and that takes the management time the tools were meant to free.

Tools make stronger whatever discipline is already there. In a disciplined company, they enforce it. In a careless one, they produce a more expensive, better-recorded version of the same mess.

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

More people who need the same information at the same time.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

The CRM is half filled in. Reports are put together by hand from several places. Meetings argue about which number is right.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

Buying software is not this pillar. A tool counts only when the work actually runs through it.

5

PILLAR 5 / 6

Fixing at the source

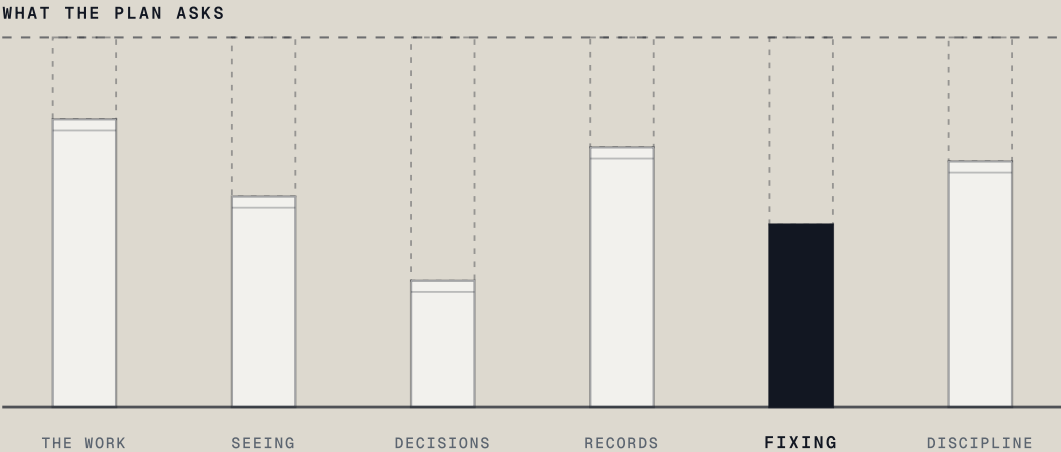
FEEDBACK AND CORRECTION

WHAT IT IS

Signals from customers, staff and the numbers reach the people who can act on them. Mistakes are fixed, then turned into a changed standard, so they do not happen again. A regular rhythm reviews what went wrong and updates the way of working.

Every way of working slips if nothing corrects it. The standard that held six months ago loosens a little at a time.

A company that corrects itself gets better over time. One that does not wears down over time.



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

A mistake that repeats now repeats across more customers, more staff and more money.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

The company makes the same mistakes it made six months ago. Complaints are solved one at a time, but whatever causes them stays. Reviews happen, but nothing changes afterwards.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

A meeting that reviews problems without changing a standard is only a conversation.

6

PILLAR 6 / 6

Discipline that holds

EXECUTION DISCIPLINE

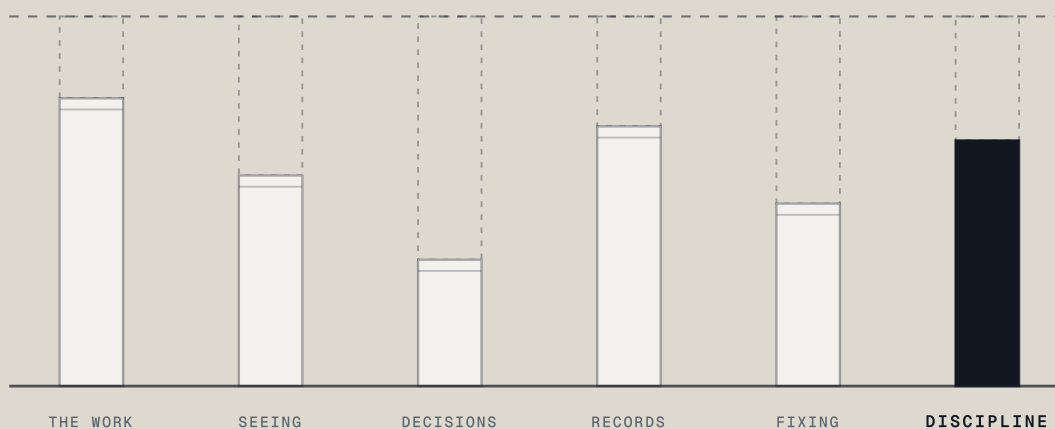
WHAT IT IS

The written ways of working, the decision rights and the standards are followed by everyone, starting at the top, including when it is inconvenient. Daily, weekly and monthly routines keep the team to its standards when pressure rises.

Discipline is built by example, not by a list of values. When a leader skips the process once, even for a good reason, the team learns the process is optional. A process that is followed only when it suits people is not a process.

A company's real way of working is what happens when the process is inconvenient and no senior person is watching.

WHAT THE PLAN ASKS



WHAT THE NEXT STAGE ASKS OF IT

Shortcuts that were occasional at today's size become normal at the next one, with more at stake each time.

SIGNS IT IS MISSING

Steps are skipped "just this once". The route for raising problems is bypassed because it seems unnecessary. The written processes describe a company that does not exist.

ON PAPER OR UNDER LOAD

If it was never really followed, it was never really the system.

The pillars lean on each other

The six are not a menu to pick from. Each one depends on the others.

Tools enforce only the discipline already there. One set of records needs discipline that holds.

Seeing without fixing is only watching. Visibility needs a way to correct what it shows.

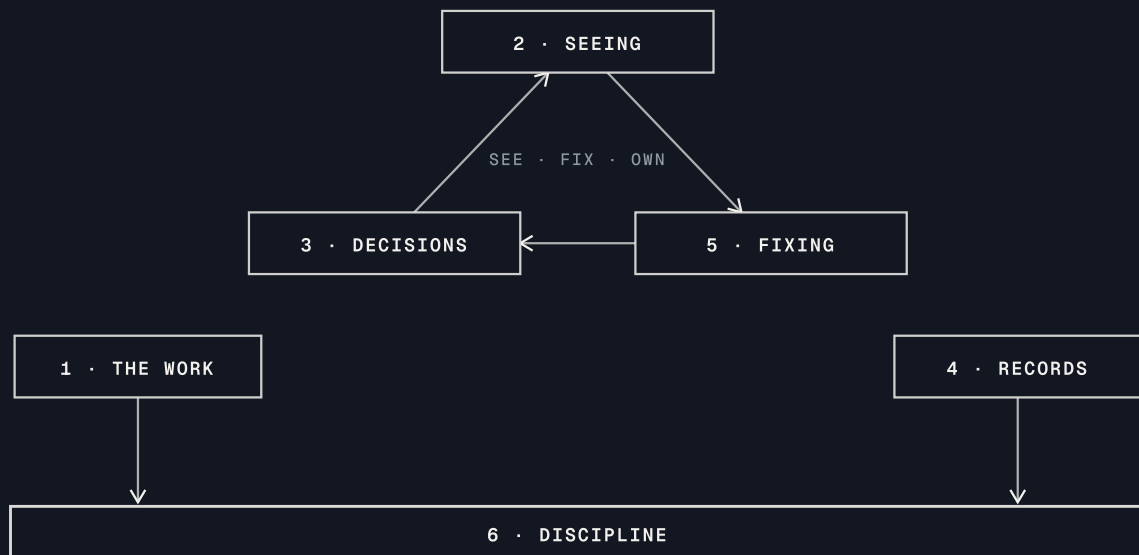
Owners need to be seen. Who decides what needs a view of whether the owner delivered.

A written process needs people who follow it. How the work runs needs discipline that holds.

A fix needs someone to make it. Fixing at the source needs clear owners.

This is why strengthening one pillar alone can make things worse. A new dashboard in a company with no clear owners produces numbers nobody acts on. New software in an undisciplined team records the disorder in more detail. The pillars have to be judged together, and against the plan.

EACH LINE READS “NEEDS”



The six as one structure. Each line reads “needs”: the pillar at the start of the arrow cannot hold without the one it points to.

05

Why the gaps cost more once the plan is moving

Growth adds load. The structure decides where that load goes.

Without the pillars, the load piles onto the people already carrying the most, until they reach their limit. The company then finds out, at the worst moment, that it was held together by people rather than by how it was built.

With the pillars, the load spreads. Ways of working take the volume. Roles share the decisions. Visibility sends each problem to the level that can fix it. The workload rises and the company handles it, not because its people are exceptional, but because it was built for it.

For owners and investors this is practical, not theoretical. Money is committed to achieve the plan. When the company underneath cannot carry it, part of that money goes into managing strain that could have been avoided, instead of reaching the plan's goal.

Timing matters too. A gap closed before the plan begins is a project. A gap closed after the plan is moving has to compete with delivery, with customers waiting and people already stretched. That is why the time to look is before the commitment is made, not after the plan has shown everyone what a careful look would have found.

06

Change, build, then check it holds

When a pillar is not strong enough for the plan, the work is one of two kinds.

Some pillars exist but have to work differently. A process that works for one site is redesigned so it travels. Decisions are moved from the founder to the managers. That is change.

Some pillars do not exist yet. There are no records to see from, no rhythm for fixing mistakes, nobody who owns the number. Those have to be built.

Either way, the test is not whether it has been written down. It is whether it holds under the real workload of the plan. And because every pillar slips back over time, the work does not end when something is put in place. It is checked against the plan, then watched for signs that the old way is coming back.

The aim is a company that comes out of the work stronger, not one that has only been made ready for a single plan.

07

Read from where you sit

Owners and boards. The six pillars often decide whether the plan you approve is carried by the company, or by a few people you cannot afford to lose. The useful question is not whether each pillar exists. It is how each one will take the plan's load.

Investors. Due diligence looks at the numbers, the market and the management team, and operational due diligence often reviews systems, processes and how far the company can grow. Gaps still appear: in Accenture's 2024 report on private equity due diligence, 40% of the private equity leaders surveyed named unexpected gaps in a company's capabilities, processes or technology as a top challenge.¹ The six pillars ask a narrower question: whether each part of the company will hold under the load of this particular plan.

Holding companies. Across a group, the same pillar can be strong in one company and missing in another. A plan that moves people, systems or customers between companies puts its load on the weakest version.

The people running the company. The six are the difference between a company that runs because you push it and one that runs because it was built to. Your time goes wherever a pillar is missing.

SOURCES

- 1 Accenture, It's time to rethink private equity due diligence, research report, 4 June 2024. <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/strategy/private-equity-due-diligence>

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 many growth plans, the six pillars are where much of the answer is found. 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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