Anatomy of an audit: day 0 to day 90

A composite engagement, sanitized, assembled from real audits run in 2025 and 2026. Company shape for this walkthrough: PE-backed software, roughly 140 people, one year post-close, growth behind plan. Every artifact named here is real; identifying details are not.

Day 0

The CEO's ask is almost always a symptom, not a diagnosis: **"my exec team agrees in the room and then nothing lands."** We take the engagement on two conditions, stated up front: we will not adjudicate who on the leadership team is right, and if the read says the timing is wrong or the constraint is not alignment, we say stop and the engagement ends there. That go/no-go is the product. The directional audit is fixed fee, two weeks, one to two senior vantage points, labeled as exactly that.

Days 1-7

Structured input sessions, not a survey blast. The questions are about the work, not feelings about the work: where does work cross functions and stall, where do decisions get made and then revisited, what does "done" mean on your three biggest priorities, where is effort pooling that no current priority explains. Alongside the sessions, the five-dimension pulse: strategy clarity, execution translation, cross-functional coordination, decision speed, team confidence, self-reported 0 to 10.

> What we do not do in week one: interview the whole company, read anyone's messages, or run sentiment analytics. Every input is invited. An instrument that has to be hidden from the people it reads produces numbers nobody will act on.

Days 8-11

The raw pulse comes back looking optimistic; it nearly always does. In this composite: clarity 3.5, translation 4.5, coordination 6, decision speed 6, confidence 7. The honest reading is not the bars, it is the gap between the bars and the transcripts underneath them, and that gap is itself a finding. **Self-reported scores overstate readiness; qualitative evidence is where the constraint shows.**

Findings get built into a system map, and every finding carries a confidence label: **Strong Signal** (directly observed, repeatedly evidenced), **Emerging Pattern** (multiple indicators, not yet triangulated), **Hypothesis to Validate** (plausible, needs broader input). Drift gets costed directionally: at this company's size and reported drift band, wasted payroll runs in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars per month. The range is the point; its job is sizing, not precision.

Days 12-14

The CEO readout. One page first: the likely constraint, why it persists, what it costs monthly, three quick wins, a 30/60/90 trajectory. Then the part that earns the fee: **the finding the CEO did not want.** In this composite, the constraint was not the underperforming function everyone expected; it was that decisions were leaving the executive meeting unowned, and the "agreement" everyone felt was the absence of an owner, not the presence of one.

> **The moment that changes the room:** reading two leaders' descriptions of the same priority side by side, without names, and letting the team hear that both descriptions are reasonable and incompatible. Nobody is wrong. The system let two right answers coexist for two quarters.

Then the go/no-go, honestly: does deeper validation (the Comprehensive Audit, six to ten interviews) change any decision you would make? If not, we say so, hand over the quick wins, and step back.

Days 15-30

Quick wins run in the room, not in a deck: a decision-rights delta published (who owns what, effective when), a shared vocabulary session (what "done," "committed," and "escalate" mean, defined once), and one kill decision, because room for the plan is made, not found. Small moves chosen precisely because the instrument pointed at them.

Days 30-60

The repair arc, if the readout earned it: an executive offsite designed around the two or three named misalignments rather than a facilitation template, and coaching for the one or two leaders whose seats sit on the seams the map exposed. Leadership is trainable, like any expert skill; the instrument tells you exactly where the training goes, which is why this part compounds instead of evaporating the way generic offsites do.

Days 60-90

Re-pulse, same five dimensions, same questions. What moved, moved because a specific behavior changed; what did not move gets named, not spun. In this composite: decision speed up materially once ownership was explicit; clarity up modestly (narrative work is slower); one hotspot unchanged and escalated into the next quarter's plan with a different owner. Then the standing decision: quarterly re-reads, a continuous instrument (this is what our product Alyn exists for), or done, with the system documented and left behind.

What this walkthrough is: a composite assembled from real 2025-2026 engagements so a prospective client can see the shape of the work without anyone's confidential findings. The method is in field use; the artifacts (one-page brief, system map, confidence labels, 30/60/90) are the real ones. TL Partners Strategy Alignment Audit. thomas@tlpartners.biz | tlpartners.biz