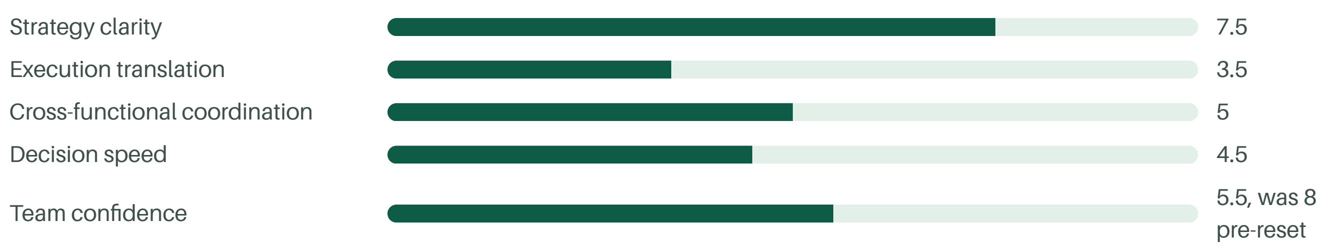
The AI reset: after the RIF, before the redesign

Sample, anonymized. Built for a peer who reset the company around AI with a materially smaller team: reduction executed, "AI-first" declared, survivors heads-down.

> **If you only read this paragraph:** the reduction was executed cleanly and the direction is clear at the top. But headcount shrank and the work did not: nobody counted which deliverables should die with the seats that produced them. So the survivors are running the old workload on the new org, "AI-first" is a slogan without a boundary, and the savings the reduction bought are quietly being spent on rework, re-escalation, and the slow exit of exactly the people you fought to keep.

ALIGNMENT PULSE (SELF-REPORTED, 0 TO 10)



The post-reset signature: clarity holds, translation collapses, and confidence is quietly re-basing. The was-8 matters more than the 5.5.

THE THREE MISALIGNMENTS MOST LIKELY TO SPEND YOUR SAVINGS

STRONG SIGNAL

1. Scope did not shrink with headcount

The org lost a third of its hands and none of its deliverables. Ownership is ambiguous at the seams the reorg left, and work falls between them while everyone is maximally busy.

STRONG SIGNAL

2. The why lives only at the top

The reasoning behind the reset was communicated once, as a conclusion. The middle is reconstructing the logic on its own, often wrongly, and planning against the reconstruction.

EMERGING PATTERN

3. AI-first has no boundary

The slogan is set; what changes in daily work is not. Adoption is personal improvisation: some teams re-built their workflow, some bought a license and kept working the old way.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY CAUSING THIS

The company redesigned its cost structure without redesigning its work structure. A reduction answers who is left; it does not answer what is still worth producing, by whom, or by what. Until the work itself is inventoried and re-assigned across humans and agents, the old operating model keeps running with fewer people, which is arithmetic, and the arithmetic loses. Benchmark: resets that pair the reduction with a work redesign in the same quarter retain their savings; resets that do not typically give a third of it back within two quarters, invisibly, as rework and regretted attrition.

THREE MOVES, NEXT 30 DAYS

Count the work, find the nobody column

Inventory every recurring deliverable: what it is, who consumes it, and whether a human, an agent, or nobody should produce it now. The nobody column is the unlock: most post-reset orgs find 15 to 20 percent of surviving

Publish the agent boundary

One page per function: what agents own, what humans own, what pairs. Adoption stops being personal improvisation and becomes an operating decision. The boundary will be wrong in places; a wrong boundary you can correct beats a vibe you cannot.

Re-anchor spans on decision load

The reorg set spans by headcount math. Reset them by decision load: who now carries how many calls per week, measured, and move the load off the two or three people the whole company is quietly queuing behind.

work has no remaining consumer. Kill it before you optimize anything.

THE COST OF DOING NOTHING (DIRECTIONAL)

This is the reduction giving itself back. At the drift level this diagnostic suggests, rework, re-escalation, and consumerless work are returning a material share of the savings each quarter, and the exit risk is concentrated in precisely the people the reduction was designed around keeping. The RIF was the expensive, painful part. The redesign is the cheap part. Doing the first without the second buys the pain without the savings.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS, COMPRESSED

0 to 30
Work inventory run; nobody column killed; agent boundary v1 published per function.

30 to 60
Spans re-anchored on decision load; the why re-taught as reasoning, not conclusion; seams ritual weekly.

60 to 90
Pulse re-measured; confidence trend arrested; savings verified as kept, not given back.

What this brief is: a directional signal from one senior vantage point, labeled by confidence, not a diagnosis. The Comprehensive Audit (6 to 10 executive interviews) validates these signals against your own leadership team and produces the shared operating model. TL Partners Strategy Alignment Audit, instrumented by Alyn. thomas@tlpartners.biz