New ownership: the first two quarters after the deal

Sample, anonymized. Built for a peer whose company was acquired by a sponsor; platform investment, new value-creation plan, largely retained leadership team.

If you only read this paragraph: the thesis was communicated and everyone applauded. But the organization is still running on the founder's clock and the founder's decision map, while the sponsor runs on a hold-period clock with different value events. Nothing was killed to make room for the new plan, so the new work stacked on top of the old, and decisions quietly route to people who no longer own them. That is why everything feels slower since the close, even though nobody changed the org chart.

ALIGNMENT PULSE (SELF-REPORTED, 0 TO 10)

Strategy clarity	8
Execution translation	4
Cross-functional coordination	5.5
Decision speed	3.5
Team confidence	7

The signature post-close shape: clarity high (everyone heard the thesis speech), decision speed lowest. The gap between 8 and 3.5 is the brief.

THE THREE MISALIGNMENTS MOST LIKELY TO BURN THE FIRST YEAR

STRONG SIGNAL

1. Two clocks, one company

The sponsor runs quarters-to-value-events. The org still runs the founder's calendar: annual planning, loose gates, consensus reviews. Work drifts because time itself is not aligned.

STRONG SIGNAL

2. Ghost decision rights

A dozen decisions moved at close, but only on paper. Managers still pre-clear with the people who used to own them. Every ghost approval adds days and blurs accountability.

EMERGING PATTERN

3. Nothing was killed

The value-creation plan added workstreams; no one retired any. The old roadmap survives as unofficial work, and the team is running two strategies on one headcount.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY CAUSING THIS

The deal changed who owns time, money, and decisions faster than anyone re-wrote those three maps. Leadership compensates in meetings, which reads as culture friction but is really an operating model still pointed at the previous owner. Benchmark: portfolio companies that reset all three maps inside the first 100 days reach planned operating cadence roughly a quarter earlier than those that let them drift.

THREE MOVES, NEXT 30 DAYS

Publish the decision-rights delta

Not a RACI. One page: the twelve decisions that changed hands at close, from whom, to whom, effective when. Ghost approvals end the day the delta is public, because pre-clearing becomes visibly optional.

Run a kill list with deal energy

Each executive retires two workstreams that do not serve the thesis, by name, before day 60. The kill list gets the same review rigor as the initiative list. Room for the new plan is made, not found.

Make the sponsor cadence the operating clock

One weekly review keyed to the value-creation levers, replacing (not joining) the legacy status meetings it obsoletes. The org learns the new clock by running on it, not by hearing about it.

THE COST OF DOING NOTHING (DIRECTIONAL)

At this drift level, the practical cost is a quarter: decision latency and duplicated strategy consume roughly one quarter of the first year's value-creation calendar. On a five-year hold underwritten to first-year momentum, that is not a rounding error; it is the difference between re-rating on plan and explaining a slow start at the first annual meeting.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS, COMPRESSED

0 to 30
Decision-rights delta published; kill list drafted per exec; weekly value-lever review starts.

30 to 60
Kill list executed; legacy meetings retired; ghost-approval spot checks in the pulse.

60 to 90
Cadence normalized; decision speed re-measured; first quarter closed on one strategy, one clock.

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