

# Five Triggers For Rethinking

## When and How to Rethink Your Leadership Structure



Leadership structures are usually designed for yesterday's challenges, not tomorrow's growth.

Over time, gaps appear between what the business needs and what the current roles, reporting lines and decision rights can actually deliver. In practice, we most often see this in five situations where performance stalls, accountability blurs and strategic initiatives lose momentum.

Recognizing these patterns early allows you to redesign leadership roles proactively, rather than waiting for a crisis or a failed transformation to force change.

### **1. Growing Internationally with a Local Leadership Model**

Many companies expand into new countries while keeping a leadership structure designed for a single domestic market. Country managers report into different functions, pricing and product decisions are made centrally with limited local insight, and no one is clearly accountable for global versus local trade-offs.

The result is slow decisions, inconsistent customer experience and internal tension between headquarters and regions. At this point, you typically need to clarify the operating model: what is global, what is regional, what is local, and who owns which decisions.

That often means creating or redefining roles such as regional leaders, global category

heads or a true head of international who can balance scale with local relevance.

## **2. Fragmented Responsibility for Supply Chain, Procurement and Operations**

As a business scales, supply chain, procurement and operations often become critical drivers of margin, service levels and resilience.

Yet responsibility for these areas is frequently scattered across finance, commercial and manufacturing. No single leader owns end-to-end performance, trade-offs are negotiated ad hoc, and improvement programs compete rather than reinforce each other.

When this happens, it is usually time to consolidate accountability. That can mean appointing a Chief Operations Officer or a head of supply chain with clear authority over planning, logistics, procurement and operations excellence.

The key is to define a role that can see the full value chain, make integrated decisions and partner effectively with commercial and finance leaders.

## **3. Operational Roles That Suddenly Need Strategic and Commercial Depth**

Another common trigger is when a role that used to be primarily operational suddenly requires broader commercial, strategic or transformation capabilities.

For example, a VP Supply Chain who now needs to lead a multi-site network optimization, or an Procurement leader who must drive a digital transformation that reshapes the procure to pay model.

The job content changes faster than the job description. In these cases, you have a choice: redesign the role and support the incumbent to grow into it, or split the responsibilities and create a complementary role with the missing capabilities.

The important step is to be explicit about what the role must deliver over the next three to five years, and then align scope, decision rights and support accordingly.

## **4. New Ownership and a New Value-Creation Agenda**

When a company enters new ownership—whether private equity, a strategic buyer or a family succession—the value-creation agenda usually shifts.

The focus might move from stability to growth, from growth to cash, or from product to

platform. Yet the leadership structure often remains anchored in the old priorities.

Roles that were designed to protect the status quo are now expected to drive change, without the mandate or tools to do so.

This is a natural moment to step back and ask: which roles are truly critical to delivering the new plan, what capabilities do they require, and how should we organize around them?

Often, this leads to creating new roles in areas like transformation, data, pricing or partnerships, and simplifying legacy structures that no longer add value.

## 5. Complexity Outgrows Informal Coordination

The fifth situation is more subtle: the business becomes too complex to run on informal coordination and personal relationships.

Decisions that used to be made quickly in a small leadership team now require cross-functional alignment across products, regions and channels. Without a clear

structure, leaders spend more time negotiating internally than serving customers.

Here, the solution is not to add more layers, but to clarify who owns which decisions, where cross-functional forums are needed, and how to design roles that cut through complexity rather than add to it.

### Putting It into Practice

Across all five situations, the underlying pattern is the same: the business model evolves, but the leadership architecture lags behind.

The most effective companies treat leadership structure as a strategic asset, not an administrative detail.

They regularly test whether roles, reporting lines and decision rights still match the value-creation agenda—and they are willing to redesign them when they do not.

Doing this thoughtfully, with clear role definitions and honest conversations about capabilities, is one of the most powerful levers you have to unlock the next wave of performance.

[About the Author](#)