Article

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The deal's done. What next?

The deal's done, the dotted lines are signed. Now, how do you mobilise and get the technology work done that will help integrate a newly acquired business?



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Our last two pieces have focussed on the pre-deal importance of technology, and in this article we turn our attention to what happens next. The deal's out of the way, but now you need to get on with the hard work.

1. Manage issues identified in due diligence.

Keep the critical business functions operating. Areas that simply can't fail must be carefully managed. This may mean building a team to cover technology that's been adopted from a former parent. Or, it may mean upgrading, migrating or replacing existing infrastructure or systems; and it may mean changing processes to work effectively without technology that supported them before. Some things are certain; strong leadership, willingness to change, and adaptability to cope with ambiguity will be critical to success.

2. Manage issues the due diligence process may have missed.

There'll always be areas which were not examined at all or in insufficient detail. These will typically be fairly minor, but they can't be ignored! During the early post-deal period allow time to look again, in detail, at the whole technology estate. Where uncertainties are found, mitigate the risks they present, and work methodically until all risks are covered. Don't dwell on the fact things were missed – they'll rarely be big enough to put the business at risk. Instead, focus the team on addressing them, learning and taking the opportunity to make improvements and changes when it arises. You'll be surprised how many technologies and systems are in place that you don't actually need.

3. Manage the Transitional Services Agreement (TSA) and third parties.

It's common for a TSA to be in place post-deal. It will be time-limited, so your goal will be to minimise reliance on third parties and to terminate the agreement on a timely basis. Don't cut corners though –the TSA is important. During the TSA, exceptional stakeholder management, and negotiation skills will be vital – and not only to manage the new partner! Make sure your team are capable, supported and empowered to have difficult conversations. A TSA is mutually agreed, so both parties need to co-operate to smooth the transition process. Have a lead contact in each organisation and have regular catch-ups. Where possible, deal with risks before they become issues, and issues before they become problems.

4. Manage other systems and technologies outside the core.

We refer to these as 'the 76' – a nod to a complex transition we did where no fewer than 76 systems were identified alongside the core systems. For us, it's become an indicator and reminder that there's other technology in use that's might be just as important. It may be big or small – but each of the 'fringe' systems needs a plan to mitigate risk, migrate, replace, retire or consolidate. That may be a full-time job in itself, so interim or internal resource will be needed. Look for opportunities to simplify business processes, and to reduce technology complexity.

Oh, and the 76 we talked about? We consolidated this to 25.

5. Look after people and they'll look after you.

We've talked before about the balance between hiring interims and looking for internal stars – putting the right team in place helps deliver results. Good people, though, are nothing without clarity. Ensure everyone has a defined role and be clear on who's responsible for what. It'll make everyone's lives easier, reduce pressure, and smooth the transition. Make sure third parties are managed, with clear lines of communication and escalation. Document your progress, listen and communicate to all involved. Don't forget the wider business.

Give people responsibility and the right level of freedom and they'll make decisions push the business and drive change.