BARYONS

OPERATING-MODEL CHANGE

AN EXECUTIVE BRIEF FOR LEADERS AFTER AN AI-RELATED REDESIGN

After the AI restructure

The execution risks that do not show up on the org chart: decision rights, handoffs, escalation paths and manager clarity after an AI-related redesign.

Decision rights | Handoffs | Manager clarity

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The chart is settled. Decisions are not.

When a company redesigns work around AI, the cost and structure changes are visible on day one. Decision rights, handoffs, escalation paths and manager clarity take longer to settle, and they decide whether the new operating model runs the way it was designed.

69%

OF HR LEADERS SAY LEADERS AND MANAGERS ARE NOT EQUIPPED TO LEAD CHANGE (2024)[1]

75%

OF HR LEADERS SAY MANAGERS ARE OVERWHELMED BY THE EXPANSION OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES (2024)[1]

Gartner found 69% of HR leaders say leaders and managers are not equipped to lead change.[1] The survey asked HR leaders rather than managers, and it covers change in general, not AI restructuring in particular. It still points at the layer that carries a redesign into daily work: the managers who explain what changed and settle the questions the plan left open.

Most redesign plans specify reporting lines, roles and savings. Fewer specify what happens to the decisions that sat with roles that changed: who now makes the call, which work moved, and where an unresolved exception goes. Those answers often live in one leader's head for weeks.

WHAT THIS BRIEF COVERS

1. **How a redesign leaves decisions behind.** The mechanism, and why it appears.
2. **A hypothetical example.** One workflow, three functions, three reasonable answers.
3. **Five checks for the next operating review.** Usable this week, with no new software or survey.
4. **Where Baryons fits.** What it adds after a redesign, and the limits of what it does.

A QUESTION TO TAKE INTO THE NEXT OPERATING REVIEW

For one customer-critical workflow, would two functions name the same decision owner today?

Why the decision system lags the org chart

An org chart records who reports to whom. It does not record who now makes the call.

A redesign changes three things at once: who does the work, who decides about it, and which work stops. The first is planned in detail. The other two are usually settled informally in the weeks that follow, one exception at a time.

WHERE EXECUTION RISK SITS

- **Orphaned decisions.** Approvals that belonged to a changed role have no stated new owner, so they drift to whoever is most senior or most available.
- **Handoffs redrawn on paper.** Work that moved to a new team or an AI-assisted step still has people on both sides who remember the old route.
- **Legacy work that should stop.** Teams keep doing tasks the redesign removed, because nobody said they could stop.
- **Exceptions without a path.** Routine cases flow through the new design. Unusual ones go to whoever handled them before, and some of those people have moved.

WHY IT HAPPENS IN WELL-RUN COMPANIES

Capable managers fill gaps quickly. After a restructure that instinct keeps work moving. It also means each manager settles open questions in their own way, often without knowing a peer settled the same question differently.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A meta-analysis of team cognition found that shared understanding of the work explains differences in team performance beyond motivation and behavior.[2]

Gartner found 75% of HR leaders say managers are overwhelmed by the expansion of their responsibilities.[1] After a redesign that widens spans or adds AI-assisted work, managers are also the people fielding the new questions, so unclear ownership and added load tend to land on the same desks. When a manager quietly absorbs an unclear decision, the cost appears later as rework or a late escalation, well after the moment when one clear sentence would have settled it.

Headline metrics can hold steady while the cost of unclear ownership builds up in escalations and rework.

03 · HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

One workflow, three reasonable answers

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE. NOT A BARYONS CUSTOMER.

Workflow: renewal pricing exceptions after an AI-assisted redesign

A 900-person software company merges customer success and renewals and adds an AI-assisted pricing recommendation. The org chart is final in week one, and renewal volume holds steady.

A regional director used to approve large discounts and now covers two regions. Customer success assumes exceptions go to finance. Finance assumes they stay with the director. The director assumes the AI recommendation settles most of them.

In week nine, three renewals reach the CFO as escalations, each with a different approval history. Asking the three groups who makes the final call in week two would probably have taken one short meeting.

What the example shows. The redesign was sound and the metrics were accurate. The gap sat in one decision that changed hands without a stated owner.

04 · EXECUTIVE CHECKS

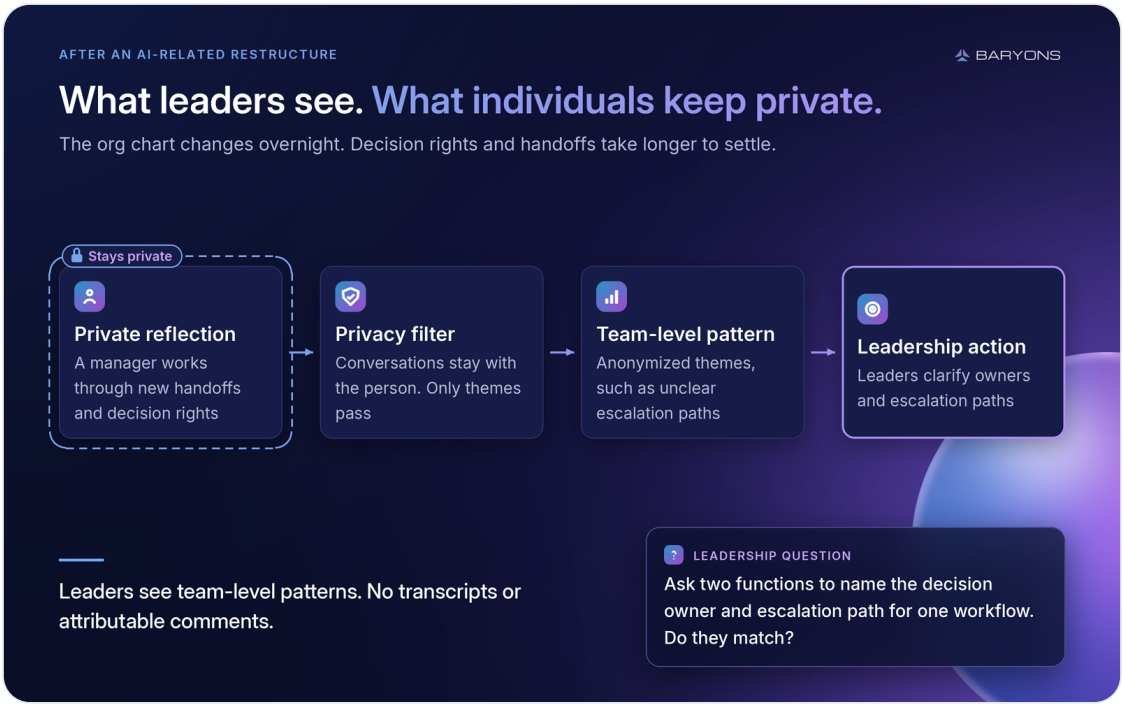
Five checks for the next operating review

Each check uses one real workflow and needs no software or survey. Ask people separately, then compare. The aim is to find a decision that needs a stated owner, not to grade anyone.

1. **Name the final call.** Pick one customer-critical workflow. Ask two functions who makes the final call now, and compare the answers.
2. **Trace what changed hands.** Ask each function which work it took on and which it handed off. Look for work both sides think the other owns.
3. **List what should stop.** Ask which tasks from the old design should no longer happen. If nobody can say, someone is probably still doing them.
4. **Follow one exception.** Ask where an unresolved exception goes today. Different answers mean the same case will be handled differently.
5. **Ask managers what reaches them.** Ask managers of the changed teams which new questions now land with them. A repeated question points to a rule worth writing down.

What Baryons contributes after a redesign

Baryons complements the change work a leadership team is already doing. It does not replace operating reviews, change programs or HR systems.



What leaders see. What individuals keep private. Illustrative.

- **Private guidance for each person.** People get private guidance grounded in approved company priorities, in conversations of a few minutes by phone or web. Each person's conversation stays theirs.
- **Aggregate signal for leaders.** Each week, Team Resonance returns the patterns across a team, with no names in any section, so leaders can respond while a change is still inexpensive. Leaders receive patterns, never individual conversations.
- **Support for the managers carrying the change.** Managers choose which work goes to AI, coach people through the change and hold the team together as spans widen. Baryons gives every manager a private thinking partner, a few minutes at a time, to work those calls through before making them.
- **No new system.** No new meeting and no integration project. Deployment is a participant list and a phone number.

What this brief does not claim

- The Gartner figures describe HR leaders' views across many organizations. They are not specific to AI restructuring and do not show that any one company has this gap.
- The example is hypothetical. It is not a Baryons customer, and its details are invented to show the mechanism.
- Research on shared understanding shows a link with team performance. It does not show that any one practice or tool will change results in a given company.
- Leaders never receive individual scores, conversations or attributable comments. Reports show patterns across a team, with no names in any section.

A NEXT STEP

Pick one workflow that changed in the redesign.

Ask two functions the first three checks this week. If the answers match, that workflow is settled. If they do not, and a focused discussion about that one workflow would be useful, we would be glad to have it at baryons.com.

SOURCES

References

1 **Gartner Survey Finds Leader and Manager Development Tops HR Leaders' List of 2025 Priorities for Third Consecutive Year.** Gartner, press release (survey of HR leaders, July 2024), October 15, 2024. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-10-15-gartner-survey-finds-leader-and-manager-development-tops-hrleaders-list

2 DeChurch, L. A., and Mesmer-Magnus, J. R.. **The cognitive underpinnings of effective teamwork: a meta-analysis.** Journal of Applied Psychology, 95(1), 32-53, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017328

Team Resonance is a Baryons feature.