BARYONS

LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORKS

AN EXECUTIVE BRIEF FOR MID-MARKET EXECUTIVE TEAMS

# The translation gap

When leadership frameworks stop at the meeting: how outcomes, trade-offs and decision rights are translated across management layers.

Frameworks | Handoffs | Decision rights

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# The framework holds. The handoff varies.

**Leadership frameworks give a company shared language for strategy, priorities and behavior. Their value can still erode after the meeting, when outcomes, trade-offs, decision rights and escalation rules are translated differently across three or more management layers. Those differences are normal, and they are easiest to close early.**

**19%**

OF U.S. EMPLOYEES STRONGLY AGREED SENIOR LEADERS SET CLEAR PRIORITIES (AUG 2026)[1]

**70%**

OF THE VARIANCE IN ENGAGEMENT ACROSS BUSINESS UNITS IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE MANAGER[2]

Gallup's August 2026 U.S. employee data found only 19% strongly agreed that senior leaders set clear priorities for their organization.[1] That figure covers employees in general, not companies using a particular framework, and it does not say why priorities feel unclear. It does show how much distance there can be between a priority set at the top and the way people further down experience it.

Whether a company uses OKRs, a balanced scorecard, a strategy-execution method or its own model, the framework defines direction. It cannot make every leader read a priority the same way. That reading happens in handoffs, and each management layer adds one. The executive team usually reads the framework the same way. The question is what happens two handoffs later.

### WHAT THIS BRIEF COVERS

1. **Where a framework hands off to people.** The mechanism, and why it appears.
2. **A hypothetical example.** One objective, two functions, two readings.
3. **Four questions for any handoff.** Usable this week, with any framework.
4. **Where Baryons fits.** What it adds between framework meetings, and its limits.

A QUESTION TO TAKE INTO THE NEXT LEADERSHIP MEETING

**Which leadership handoff is hardest to keep clear in your organization?**

# Where a framework hands off to people

## A framework defines the priority. Each leader still decides what it means for their next trade-off.

Frameworks are strongest at the top of a company, where the people who set a priority discuss it together. Below that, the priority is translated by leaders who were not in the room. The objective stays the same. The reading of what to protect, who decides and when to escalate can change at each step.

### WHAT GETS TRANSLATED

- **The outcome that must stay the same.** Leaders keep the headline but may weigh its parts differently, for example speed against quality.
- **Who can make the next trade-off.** Decision rights rarely appear in the framework itself, so each layer infers them.
- **What would justify changing course.** One leader adapts quickly when conditions change; another holds the plan to show discipline.
- **When disagreement goes up.** Escalation norms vary by leader, so the same conflict surfaces at different times.

### WHY IT HAPPENS IN WELL-RUN COMPANIES

Companies with a mature framework trust it. Leaders act on their reading of a priority quickly rather than reopening it, which is the point of shared language. It also means small differences in reading become committed work before anyone compares them.

### 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.[3]

Gallup research finds managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement.[2] The finding is about engagement rather than frameworks, and it does not describe any one company. It does show how much of the daily experience of work runs through managers, who are also the people translating the framework into decisions three layers below the executive team. When readings differ, each layer can still report progress honestly against the same objective.

**Differences in interpretation are easiest to discuss before they become rework.**

03 · HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

# One objective, two reasonable readings

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE. NOT A BARYONS CUSTOMER.

### Objective: grow mid-market renewals this year

A 1,100-person company runs on OKRs. The executive team sets an objective to grow mid-market renewals, and every function writes key results beneath it.

Customer success reads the objective as protecting at-risk accounts and moves senior staff onto them. Product reads it as shipping what renewal customers asked for and reorders the roadmap. Two layers down, a support lead and a product manager make opposite calls on the same account.

Both functions report progress on their key results. The conflict surfaces in a quarterly review. Each function followed the framework faithfully. Nobody had agreed what the objective meant for an account where the two readings met.

**What the example shows.** The objective was well written and both functions were committed to it. The gap sat in what each layer decided the objective meant for its next trade-off. Neither function needed a new framework, only a shared answer to one question.

04 · EXECUTIVE CHECKS

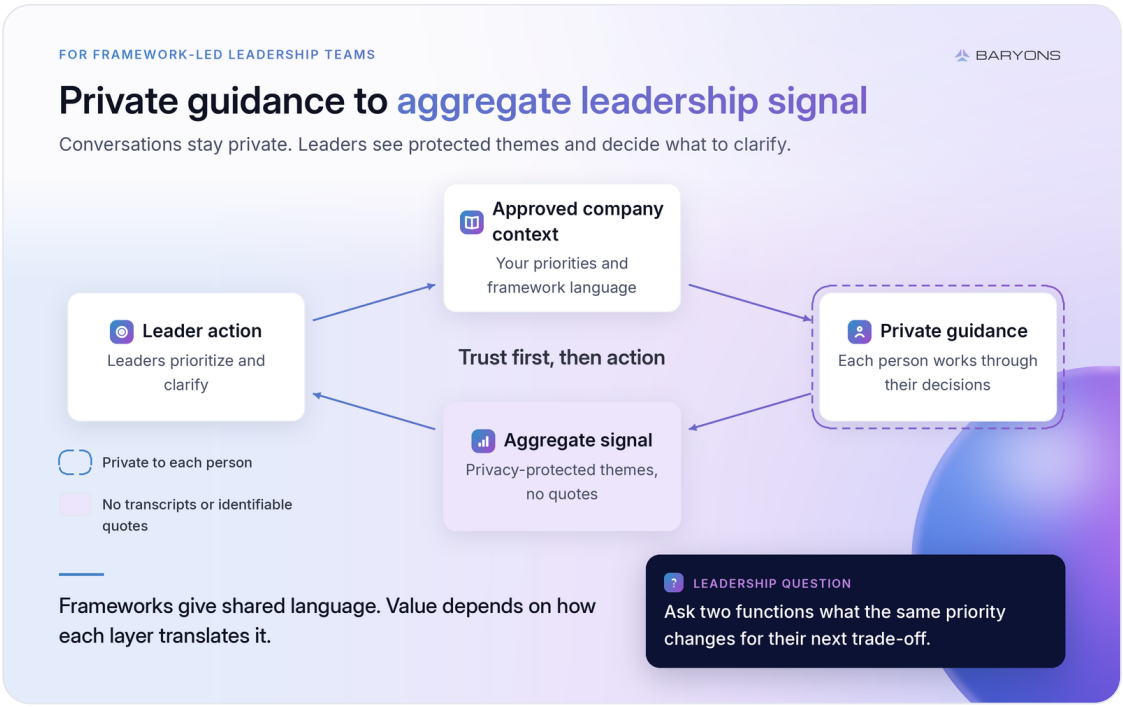
# Four questions for any handoff

Pick one priority that passes through at least three leaders. Ask the executive sponsor, a department head and the delivery owner separately, then compare the answers. The answers do not need to match word for word. Look for differences in what each person would actually do.

1. **What outcome must stay the same?** If the answers name different outcomes, the priority needs one sentence on what it protects and what it can give up.
2. **Who can make the next trade-off?** Different names point to a decision right that the framework leaves open, which is normal and worth settling.
3. **What would justify changing course?** Different thresholds mean one team will adapt while another holds the plan, and both will believe they are right.
4. **When should disagreement be escalated?** If nobody can say, disagreements will surface late or not at all, usually as friction between teams.

# What Baryons contributes between meetings

**Baryons complements the leadership framework you use. It does not replace it, connect to it or change how its meetings run, and it does not need access to email, meetings or task systems.**




Private guidance to aggregate leadership signal. 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.
- **Shared priorities.** Strategy changes shape every time it is retold. Baryons gives people a common working vocabulary for their priorities, and Team Resonance returns, in aggregate, the themes resonating across the team, so leaders can close gaps before they show up as rework.
- **Privacy first.** Team Resonance is fully anonymized and aggregated, with no names in any section. Leaders receive patterns, never individual conversations.
- **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 Gallup figures describe employees in general. They are not specific to any framework and do not show that any one company has this gap. They come from surveys, not from a review of how frameworks are used.
- 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.
- Baryons is independent of every framework and its owners. Leaders never receive individual scores or conversations.

A NEXT STEP

### Pick one priority that crosses three leadership layers.

Ask the four questions this week, separately. The questions work with OKRs, a scorecard or a model of your own. If the answers line up, you have your confirmation. If they do not, and a focused discussion about that one handoff would be useful, we would be glad to have it at baryons.com.

SOURCES

# References

1 **Leadership & Management (indicator, U.S. employee data as of August 2026).** Gallup, accessed November 2026. https://www.gallup.com/404252/indicator-leadership-management.aspx

2 Beck, R. J., and Harter, J.. **Why Great Managers Are So Rare.** Gallup, March 25, 2014. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/231593/why-great-managers-rare.aspx

3 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

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