



# How to Do Change Activation for M&A Integrations

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# M&A is Now Bigger Than Ever. Parallel Integrations Are the New Normal.

**\$4.9  
Trillion**

Global M&A deal value in  
2025 — the highest on record

Bain & Company

**111  
Mega-deals**

Announced in 2025,  
up 76% year-over-year

Bain & Company

**80%+**

Of dealmakers expect to  
transact a greater volume of  
deals in the next 12 months

Deloitte

“Our change team of three is managing 15+ concurrent integrations right now, ranging from 80 to 25,000 employees. All running at the same time.”

— Head of Change Management, enterprise technology company



# How many M&A integrations is your organization managing right now?

- Just one
- 2 - 10
- More than 10
- None active, but one's on the horizon
- We don't track this centrally



# At what stage is your current or most recent integration?

- Pre-close / planning phase
- Day 1 to 90 days
- 90 days to 1 year in
- Post-integration review
- We're in multiple stages simultaneously



# Misfit in **Ways of Working** is The Single Biggest Reason M&As Fail

Cultural misalignment doesn't just slow integration down. It drives people out and destroys deal value.

**50–60%** Of deals fail due to cultural issues

**45%** Of employees leave within the first year. Up to 75% exit within three years.

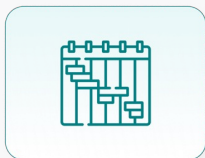
**70%+** Of deals see cultural integration issues cost at least \$1M. Nearly 25% exceed \$5M in lost value.

“We run a three-year integration program per acquisition. With deals closing back to back, some of our employees are hitting four major launches in a single quarter.”

— Head of People Integration, national distribution company

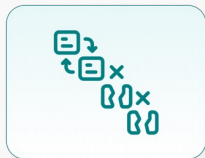


# Why Traditional Change Management Breaks in an M&A



## Volume of change is going up

Change fatigue has increased by 340% over the last decade. Today, 74% of employees report moderate to severe fatigue before the integration even starts.



## Traditional approaches can't keep up

Most organizations over-engineer the integration plan, which instantly falls flat at 7% email open rates for internal change comms. Managers don't have the skill or capacity to fill that gap. Worse still, you only find out six months later.



## Too large variance in sentiment, impact severity, rollout waves, etc

Already unclear governance gets muddier. Already resistant employees become more resistant due to fear, uncertainty, and cultural clash. Four people running change for 10,000 employees doesn't help either.



# What's your biggest challenge right now?

- Getting employees to understand what's changing for them
- Managing change fatigue across multiple initiatives
- Keeping leaders aligned and visible
- Measuring what's actually working
- Keeping pace with the volume of integration



# The Change Activation Model

```
graph TD; Alignment --> Adoption; Adoption --> Adaptation; Adaptation --> Alignment;
```

## Alignment

Get everyone moving towards a common north star with personalized and leader-led comms.

## Adoption

Automate in-the-flow-of-work reinforcement that scales across multiple integrations.

## Adaptation

Use real-time adoption and change saturation data to inform prioritization and interventions.

# Alignment

Address the sentiment and communicate the expectations with every stakeholder.

**Personalization** makes that scalable.



# What Are We Aligning?

## Define Your Integration North Star Early

Personalized comms only work if there's something clear to align people toward.

### Define early:

Communicate what success looks like before Day 1.

Target operating model, governance structure, and integration KPIs — owned by accountable leaders, with numbers attached.

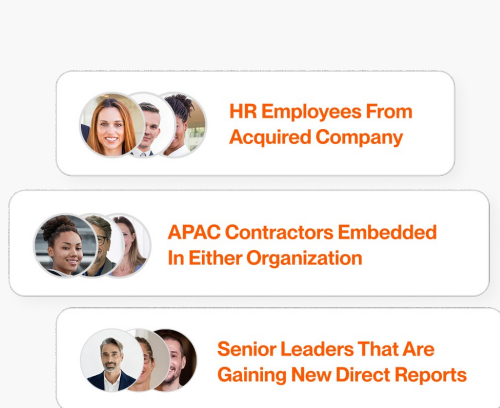
### Then prioritize ruthlessly:

Hygiene factors?	Organic absorption?
New reporting structures	Informal team norms
System and tool changes	Peer relationship building
Role and responsibility shifts	Gradual culture blending
Benefits and contract changes	Shared language and terminology

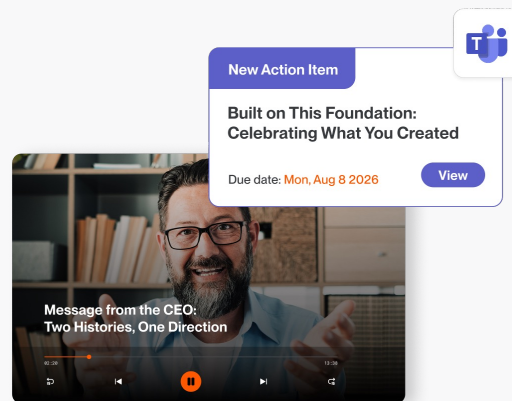


# Personalize by Role, Tenure, and Legacy Company

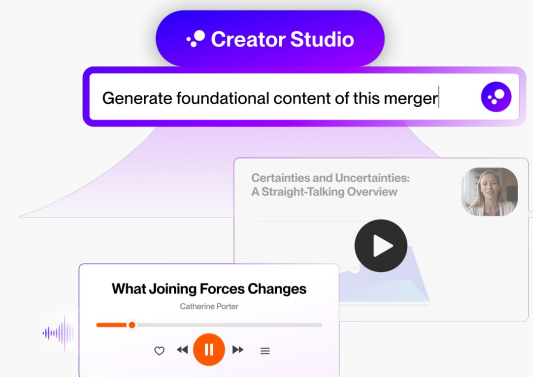
One person going through an acquisition is navigating changes to their role, team, reporting line, contracts, benefits, and day-to-day tools. Content that acknowledges where someone is coming from—their company, their function, what's actually changing for them—is what earns trust and engagement.



Segment audiences by legacy company, role, seniority, and which changes directly affect them.



Welcome acquired employees in their own context first: acknowledge their legacy culture and contributions before introducing the combined identity.



Create M&A 101 foundational content: what the integration means, common terminology, and what employees can expect and when.



# Equip Leaders and Managers to Lead From the Front

Leaders are the primary trust vehicle during M&A. They need an extra layer of enablement to help their teams navigate the transition.

# 11x

More likely to report full engagement —  
for employees who trust their senior  
leaders during integration

**Chloe**  
Hey @SamPorter, here's the podcast that'll help align your workflow with the new system.

**System & Process Changes**  
by Daniel Mercer

**The Bigger Picture: What We're Building Together**  
Chloe Campbell

**LIVE CHAT**  
Steve: What breaks most customer journeys inside organizations?  
Amy: Loving the insights here! 🍌  
Kevin: What's wrong with current journeys?

**Sam**  
Thanks Chloe! This is great!

• LIVE  
1382 online  
End Event

- **Build leader-specific toolkits for their unique challenges:** how to address uncertainty, have difficult conversations, and model the desired culture under pressure.
- **Give leaders authentic formats that scales their reach beyond email:** short videos, podcast messages, livestream Q&As, delivered through channels employees already use.
- **Give leaders real-time visibility into team sentiment** so they can identify where trust is eroding and respond before it compounds.



# Adoption

One central team can't keep up with the large variance in system changes, impact severity, timed rollouts, etc.

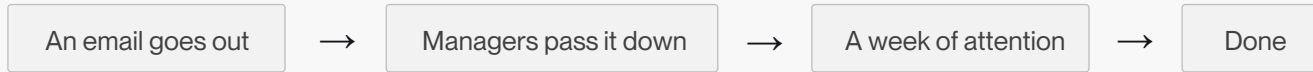
**Automate timed delivery** to scale adoption.



# Use Automation to Drive Reinforcement, Not Managers

Manager-led cascading fades within weeks. Automated nudges at the right moment keep behavior change alive.

## The typical manager cascade:



## With In-Workflow Automation:

Onboarding Journey Completion (%)

Employee	Completion (%)
Employee 1	81%
Employee 2	21% (Nudged)
Employee 3	69%

**The system triggers follow-ups based on real-time behavior**

If someone hasn't completed their integration onboarding journey by week 4, they receive a X prompts.

Kate (expense approver) logs into new expense system for the first time

Trigger

**New Action Item**

How Expense Approvals Work in the New System

Due date: Mon, Apr 8 2026

View

**Nudges fire at the moment of need**

When an employee is about to perform a new task or process for the first time, the relevant support appears right then.

You have a new action item 10:00am  
'Bridging Cultures across...'

New Action Item

Your action item is due in 12:06pm  
7 days

Action Item Due

**Reminders are spaced and sequenced**

Runs for as long as needed without eating into manual capacity, and adapts to system adoption and drop offs.



# Meet People in Their Flow of Work

If employees have to go somewhere new to adopt change, most won't. The channel is the strategy.

	Traditional Delivery	In-flow Delivery
Channel	SharePoint, email, intranet	Microsoft Teams, Slack, mobile
Engagement Rate	~7% email open rate	80%+ engagement
Format	30-page PDFs, document libraries	Bite-sized, role-specific content
Employee Experience	Requires effort to find and consume	Arrives where they already are

***What we hear from customers:***

“Employees don't even realize they're using a change activation platform because it arrives as a message in the tool they're already in.”



# Adaptation

Build an operating model based on agility and staying close to reality, where employee feedback and real-time data shape continuous rollouts.

Data is your compass.



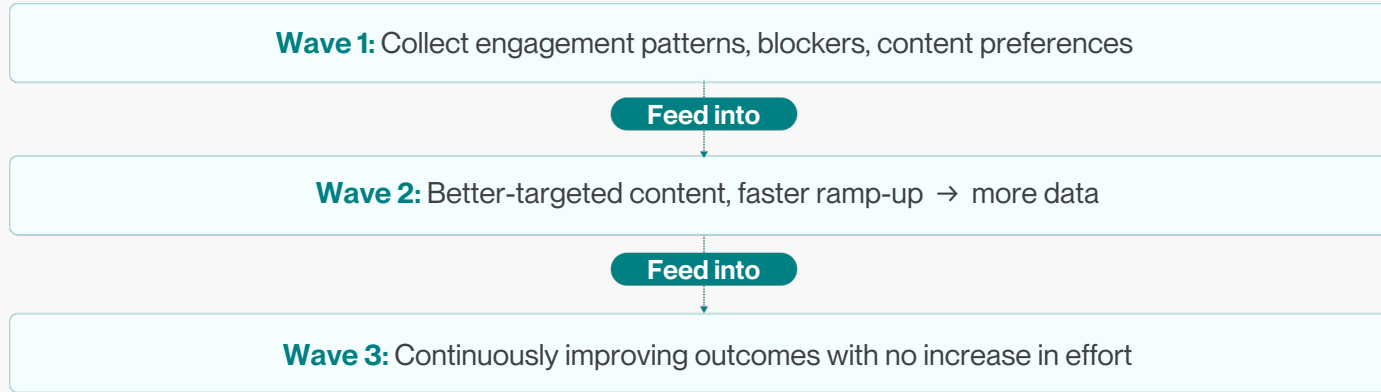
# How are you measuring integration success?

- Manager feedback and anecdotal reporting**
- Tool adoption and process completion rates**
- Employee engagement or sentiment surveys**
- Talent retention and deal goal attainment**
- We don't have clear metrics yet**



# Build a Feedback Loop that Compounds

Every integration generates data. The organizations that capture and apply it build a change activation advantage that gets stronger over time.



- **In-house change intelligence:** Which content formats work best for which teams, and where resistance typically forms — captured and applied to every integration that follows.
- **Internal business case:** Track attrition, deal goal attainment, and cultural adoption for integrations with structured change activation versus those without

Organizations that successfully navigate continuous change demonstrate

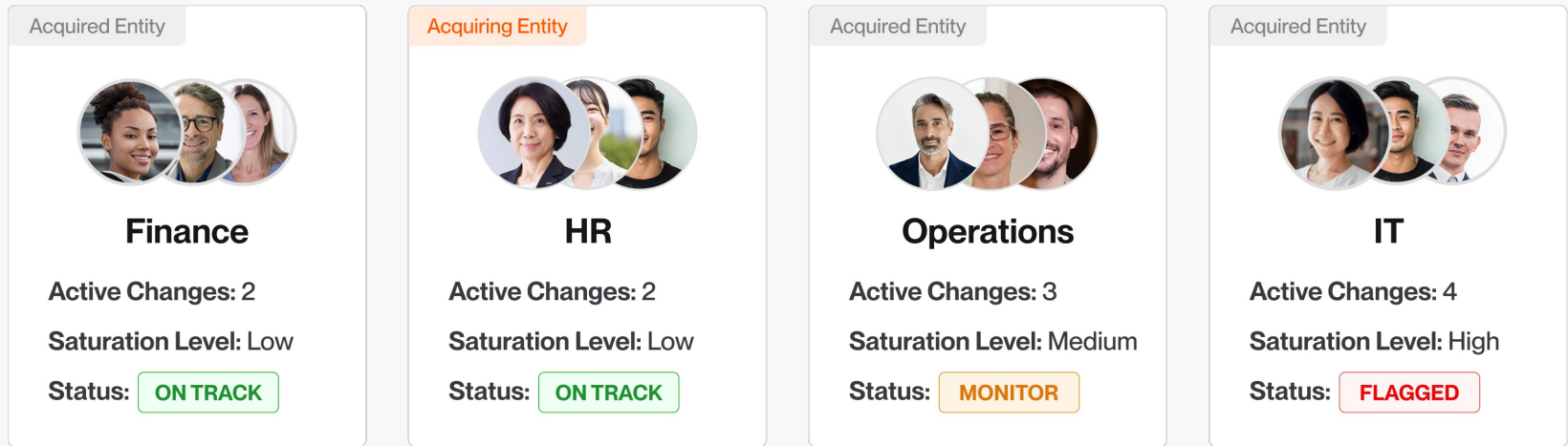
**3.5x higher revenue growth and 2.1x greater profitability than peers who don't.**



# Monitor Change Saturation in Real Time

Track sentiment shifts over time. See where overload and fatigue are building before stakeholders disengage.

- **Explicit feedback captures structured input:** Weekly pulse surveys during critical integration phases.
- **Implicit feedback supplies continuous data without survey fatigue:** Reactions, comments, time-on-content



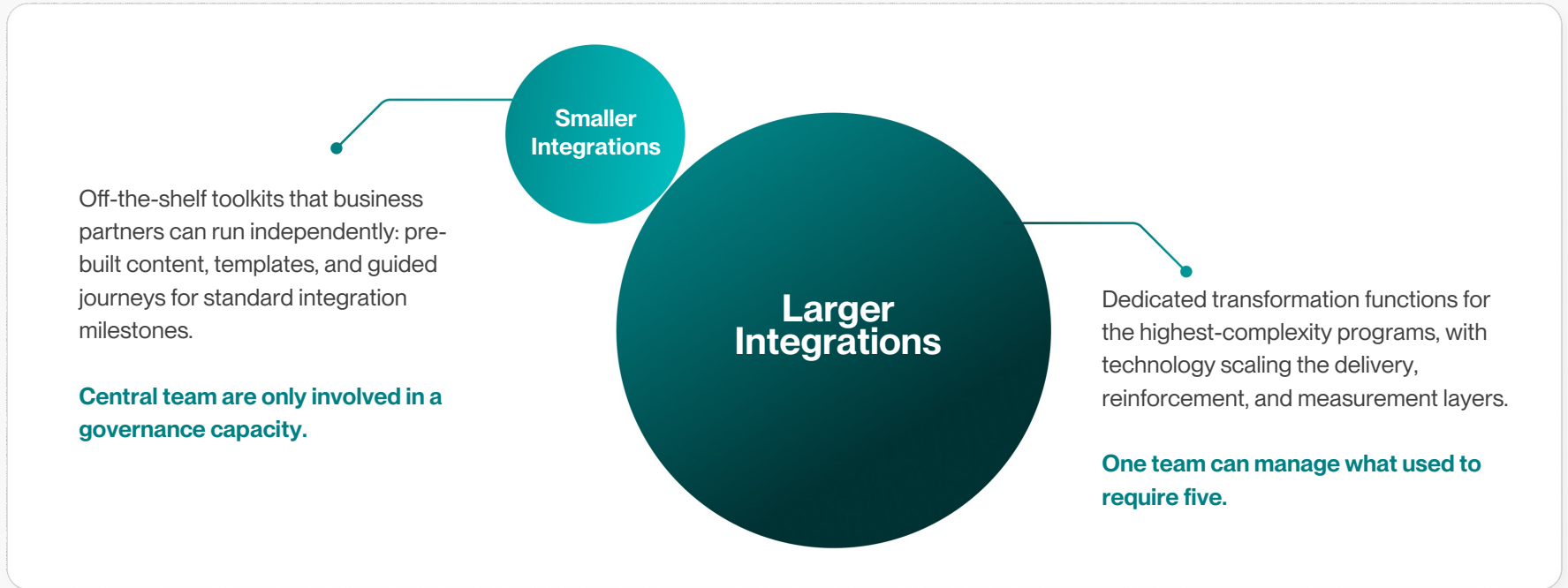
"When I can show leadership that engineers are already navigating four changes, they listen. You might want to wait on this one."

— Change lead, global technology company



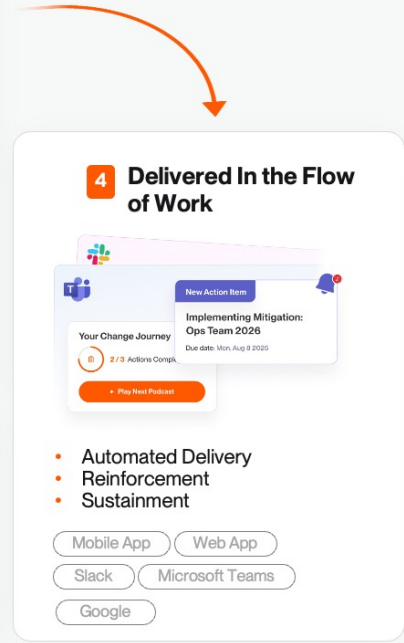
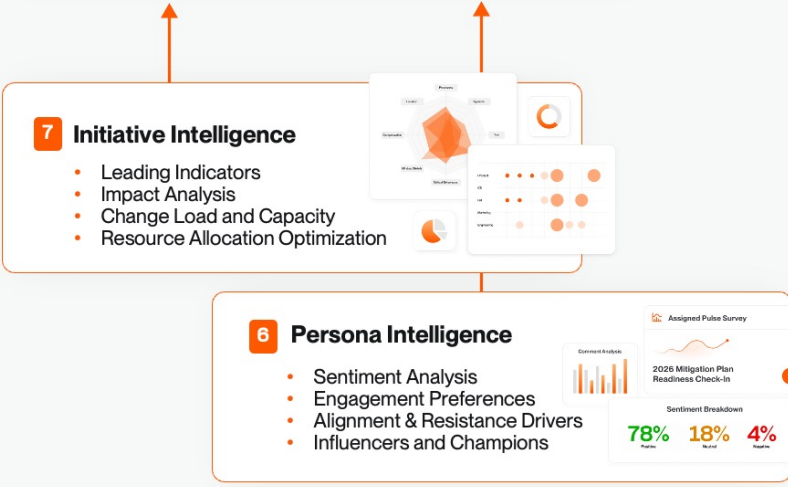
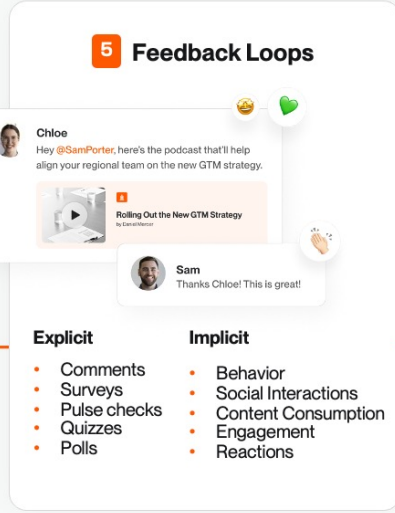
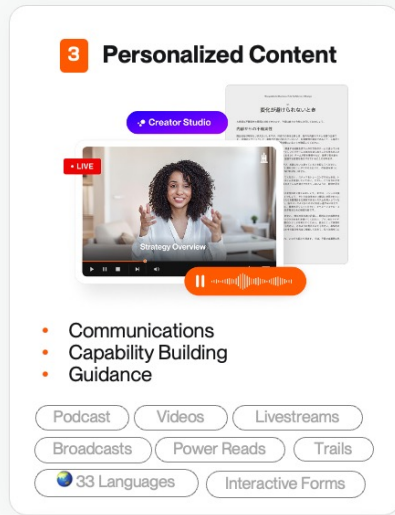
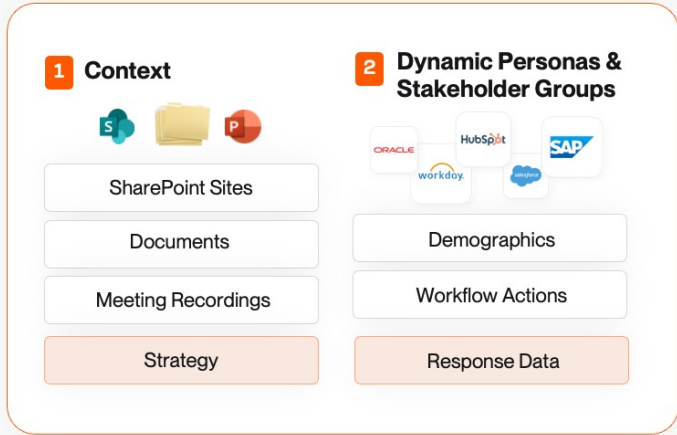
# Build a Scalable Activation Model

You can't hand-hold every integration. Build a model that scales through technology, not headcount.

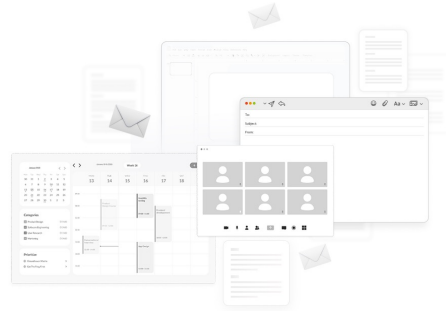


A governance process oversees prioritization and organization-wide coordination, **controlling what launches when to prevent stakeholder overload.**



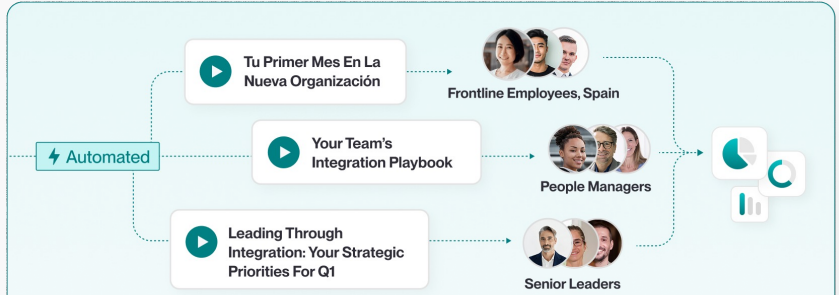


# Before Change Activation → After Change Activation



## Before

- ✗ Scattered communications
- ✗ ~7% email engagement
- ✗ Manager-dependent cascading
- ✗ No real-time visibility
- ✗ Reactive interventions, months too late
- ✗ Change fatigue, high attrition
- ✗ Integration delays
- ✗ Deal value at risk



## After

- ✓ Personalized activation in the flow of work
- ✓ 80%+ engagement across the organization
- ✓ Automated reinforcement at the moment of need
- ✓ Live dashboards on adoption, saturation, and sentiment
- ✓ Targeted actions informed by real-time data
- ✓ Retained talent and a supported workforce
- ✓ Up to 8x faster time-to-alignment
- ✓ Protected ROI and faster integrations next time



# The ROI When You Get it Right



## Speed of Getting to the Finish Line

Structured change activation compresses integration timelines by up to 8x compared to industry benchmarks, without proportionally growing your transformation team.



## Faster and Higher Adoption Rates

In-flow, personalized delivery achieves over 80% engagement, compared to the 7% open rates of email-based change comms. Adoption rates reach 90–95%, consistently exceeding pre-integration targets.



## Realizing Synergy Targets with the Right People

Employees who are aligned and supported through integration are 3.5x more likely to stay at 18 months, protecting the human capital and the value it was meant to create.



# What This Means For You

## Key Takeaways

1. M&A volume is accelerating and traditional change approaches can't keep up. **You need a scalable, technology-enabled approach.**
2. **Alignment starts before Day 1:** personalize the experience by role, tenure, and legacy company. Bridge the ways of working gap before the systems gap.
3. **Adoption requires automated reinforcement in the flow of work.** Not manager cascading, not email blasts, not SharePoint sites.
4. **Adaptation is your competitive advantage:** real-time data on sentiment, saturation, and adoption lets you course-correct mid-integration, not six months late.
5. **The three pillars compound:** alignment feeds adoption, adoption generates data for adaptation, and adaptation enables you to drive better alignment - making your next integration faster and smarter.



# What This Means For You

## Immediate Actions

1. **Audit your current integration change approach:** are you segmenting audiences in enough detail? Can you see change saturation across groups?
2. **Identify your hygiene factors:** what are the must-do changes to drive key business behaviors vs. what can employees absorb organically over time?
3. **Pilot a data-driven approach on your current or next integration:** measure feedback loops, adoption, and engagement in real time.
4. **Start building a reusable M&A activation playbook** — don't wait until the next deal closes.
5. **Connect with us for a personalized demo** showing how this framework applies to your specific M&A context.



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