

# A 4-Week Operational Reset for Professional Services Firms



REMOVE THE HIDDEN FRICTIONS AFFECTING PROFITABILITY, ALIGNMENT, AND LEADERSHIP FOCUS

## WEEK FOUR WHY GROWING FIRMS TURN LEADERS INTO COORDINATORS—AND HOW TO CHANGE IT

As professional services firms grow, functions like finance, HR, and technology begin to specialize.

But leadership decisions rarely sit inside just one function.

- Hiring plans depend on financial forecasts.
- Growth initiatives depend on staffing capacity.
- Technology investments depend on operational priorities.

When those systems don't work together, leaders end up connecting the dots themselves. **This is the Coordination Drag.**

### The Three Leadership Decision Conversations

Growing professional services firms revisit three kinds of leadership decisions repeatedly.

These decisions shape how the firm grows, how work gets distributed, and where it invests next.

Each one requires insight from several parts of the organization.

#### 1. Growth Decisions

Growth conversations focus on how the firm expands.

Leaders ask questions like:

- Should we hire additional staff?
- Is this the right time to expand a service line?
- Can the firm support additional client demand?

To answer those questions, leaders need financial forecasts, recruiting pipelines, and clear visibility into team capacity.

#### 2. Capacity Decisions

Capacity conversations focus on how work moves across the firm.

Leaders review staffing levels, utilization, and workload to determine whether teams can sustain current demand. They also look ahead to see where pressure may build next.

Those discussions only work when financial forecasts, staffing visibility, and recruiting timelines appear in the same conversation.

#### 3. Investment Decisions

The third set of conversations centers on investment.

Growing firms regularly decide where to invest in systems, technology, and internal infrastructure. Those investments shape how the firm operates in the years ahead.

To make those decisions well, leaders need clear insight into financial performance, workforce plans, and operational priorities.

These decision conversations happen constantly in growing firms. The real question is how easily leaders can access the information required to make them. If it's cumbersome, leadership spends its time assembling the information needed to make strong decisions.

### What Coordination Gaps Cost the Firm

Coordination drag shows up as a steady drain on leadership time.

When finance, talent, and systems don't connect cleanly, leaders start doing "glue work" no one planned for: translating between teams, chasing inputs, reconciling differences, and re-explaining context.

That work has a real cost.

**It pulls partners and senior managers out of their highest-value roles.**

Instead of focusing on client strategy, business development, or mentoring, leaders spend time answering the same three questions: *What's true? What's changed? What does that mean for staffing or cash?*

Decisions that should be routine start to slow down.

Hiring takes longer because the forecast doesn't feel current. Investments get pushed because the data isn't decision-ready. Distributions require more debate because the inputs don't line up.

**Each department starts solving its own problems in isolation.**

Each function does what it's measured on. Finance closes the books. HR fills roles. IT keeps systems running. But without a shared coordination layer, teams solve their own problems in isolation.

**You start to see it in the client experience.**

Work slows because staffing decisions lag. High performers get over-assigned because capacity visibility is unclear. Partners step back into delivery because the firm can't confidently match demand to capacity.

### Are Your Decision Inputs Aligned?

Are your leaders getting the information they need without having to piece it together themselves?

#### Financial Insight

Look at how financial information shows up in leadership conversations.

- Do hiring or growth discussions begin with a shared financial forecast?
- When partners evaluate expansions, do they already have visibility into projected margin and cash impact?
- Are financial reports delivered when leadership is discussing strategy, or after decisions have already started forming?
- Do investment conversations rely on forward-looking financial models, or mostly on prior-period performance?
- When leaders ask, "Can we afford to do this?" does the answer come quickly, or require follow-up analysis?

#### Talent Insight

Next, consider how workforce planning connects to leadership decisions.

- When leaders discuss hiring, do they already have a shared view of team capacity, or does someone need to gather that information during the conversation?
- When evaluating new client work or growth opportunities, can leadership quickly determine whether the firm has the staffing depth to support it?
- Do recruiting timelines, staffing capacity, and financial projections appear in the same planning discussions, or do they surface separately across departments?
- During leadership meetings, does everyone work from the same understanding of talent capacity, or do partners bring different assumptions into the conversation?

### Operational Insight

Finally, evaluate how operational data supports leadership visibility.

- When leaders discuss staffing or client demand, can they easily see workload distribution across teams?
- Do operational systems provide a clear picture of utilization, pipeline, and delivery capacity?
- Can leadership connect operational data to financial and talent planning without switching between multiple systems?

## How to Remove the Coordination Drag

Removing the Coordination Drag means redesigning how information moves across the firm so leadership decisions start with aligned insight.

### 1. Align Finance, HR, and Operational Leadership

Each function needs clear ownership, but those leaders must also coordinate regularly around shared priorities. When finance, HR, and operations plan together, leadership discussions begin with aligned information rather than competing inputs.

### 2. Connect Workforce Planning to Financial Forecasting

Hiring plans should reflect financial projections, and financial projections should reflect workforce capacity. When those conversations happen together, leaders can evaluate growth opportunities more clearly.

### 3. Ensure Systems Produce Decision-Ready Insight

Technology should make information easier to access, not harder. Well-designed systems allow financial data, workforce metrics, and operational insight to flow naturally into leadership discussions.

**This supports faster decision-making.**

### 4. Automate The Coordination Layer

Many firms try to solve coordination gaps by assigning someone to manage them. In practice, that just shifts the burden from leadership to another role.

High-performing firms design their systems so coordination happens automatically.

- Financial forecasts feed workforce planning models.
- Staffing capacity updates flow into operational dashboards.
- Key metrics update in real time instead of requiring manual updates.

When systems share data and workflows connect across departments, leadership no longer needs to assemble the operating picture before making decisions.

If your systems aren't giving you a clear, aligned view of how the firm is operating, it may be time to take a closer look. **We're happy to walk through it with you.**

**REMOVE THE  
COORDINATION DRAG**  
Schedule a Review