WHERE THE DIAGNOSTIC STARTS · FREE

Five signals that a gap exists between what the company is today and what it **could become**

SCALE & PRESSURE / FOR FOUNDERS

Growth introduces structural strain, and the practices that built the company start working against the one being built now.

> The gap opens where leadership, strategy and technology have stopped evolving together. In a founder-led company the signals that would be obvious in a large, distributed organization are often invisible, because you are the one driving everything. The company runs because you are personally compensating for what it cannot yet do on its own.
>
> This is not about companies that are failing. The founders this describes are winning most of the time. The question is whether that winning is making the company structurally stronger, or just bigger. So you are looking less for what is breaking and more for what is only holding together because you are in the chair.

01

Decisions waiting for consensus while the market has already moved

The organization is consistently arriving at decisions after the optimal window for making them has narrowed or closed. The alignment process is indistinguishable from delay.

> FROM THE FOUNDER'S SEAT
>
> *How many decisions came to you this week that could have been made equally well by someone else with the right authority and context?*

Where this is developed: How do founders avoid becoming the bottleneck? →

02

Strategy that reads well on paper but feels detached from market pace

The organization is executing with discipline against a strategy that is increasingly misaligned with current conditions. The assumptions behind it have not been genuinely tested since they were set.

> FROM THE FOUNDER'S SEAT
>
> *Can three members of your team articulate the strategic priorities, and the reasoning behind them, as clearly and completely as you can?*

Where this is developed: Growth is scaling faster than the organization can hold together →

03

Technology investment that is fragmented rather than connected

Technology has accumulated rather than compounded. Individual systems solve individual problems, and together they have created a coordination burden that was not there before the investments were made.

> FROM THE FOUNDER'S SEAT
>
> *How much time does your team spend each week on work that exists because of the gaps between your systems, rather than on work that advances priorities?*

Where this is developed: Why does growth become harder to manage even as revenue increases? →

04

Leadership discipline that has quietly become drag rather than direction

The structures designed to create accountability and direction are consuming more organizational energy than they generate in value. Overhead has outlived the conditions that warranted it.

> FROM THE FOUNDER'S SEAT
>
> *Where in the organization does initiative consistently stop and wait for your direction rather than proceeding with it?*

Where this is developed: Why solving problems one at a time doesn't scale →

05

Performance that still looks acceptable but the process has stopped producing learning

The organization is delivering against its commitments but is not getting smarter about what it does. Teams execute more reactively, surprises increase, and it runs harder to hold position rather than building momentum.

> FROM THE FOUNDER'S SEAT
>
> *Is the organization developing capabilities meaningfully different from the ones it already had, or primarily improving execution of what it already knows?*

Where this is developed: Momentum is making the business harder to understand →

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

They are indicators, not the full picture, and they are where the diagnostic starts rather than where it ends. A complete diagnostic looks at the maturity of each of the three variables, where synchronization is breaking down between them, and what is creating the gap in your particular context.

If the signals suggest a gap, there are two ways to take it further. *Falling Behind?* walks the full diagnostic seat by seat, at your own pace. When what you are seeing is a pattern rather than a single signal, an outside read is usually faster than working it out alone.

The thinking here is mine: every argument, every position, every judgment about what is worth your attention. Production is AI-assisted, which is what makes it possible to keep this current for three seats and to refresh it when conditions move. tommawhinney.studio/#how-this-is-made