



# Case Study: Rebuilding Operational Clarity in a Fast-Growing Technology Business

## 1. Situation Summary & Project Goals

A fast-growing technology business had reached a point where growth was exposing serious operational weaknesses. The senior leadership team was deeply involved in day-to-day activity, middle management was underperforming, and communication across the organisation had become fragmented. Team members were unclear on priorities, ownership was weak, and even routine tasks required repeated prompting and follow-up.

The project goal was to understand why these problems were happening and identify the root causes behind the symptoms. The strategic challenge was not simply to make the business run more smoothly, but to move the leadership team out of the bottleneck and create an operating model that could scale.

## 2. Discovery Phase Goals

The discovery phase was designed to identify what was really driving the issues experienced by the leadership team. That meant looking beyond surface-level frustrations and examining communication patterns, tool usage, management behaviour, process discipline, and the broader culture of ownership. The aim was to separate symptoms from causes and provide practical recommendations that could be prioritised and implemented.

A key part of this work was understanding the CEO and senior management dynamic. The leadership team had become heavily involved in operational detail, which limited their ability to focus on strategy and made the business increasingly dependent on top-down intervention.

## 3. Summary

The core issue was a lack of clear direction and accountability. Many of the problems were already visible to leadership, but the review showed that they were more deeply embedded

and more damaging than they initially appeared. Communication was inconsistent, JIRA and Confluence were underused, and different parts of the business were operating in silos rather than working to a shared purpose.

A recurring theme was that the CEO and senior team had become the default owners of too much of the business. Instead of setting direction and enabling others to deliver, they were pulled into the details of execution. That created a bottleneck at the top, reduced ownership below, and reinforced a culture of dependency.

## 4. Findings Overview

### 4.1 Goals

The business lacked a clearly understood mission and consistent goals. Priorities appeared to shift frequently, which made people reactive and unsure whether current work would still matter in the near future. This uncertainty contributed directly to weak ownership and made it difficult for teams to align their work to a stable direction.

A major cause was that the senior leadership team did not have enough time to focus on strategic goals because they were pulled into too much day-to-day activity. In effect, the CEO and senior team were spending their energy fighting immediate fires rather than shaping the future of the business.

### 4.2 Middle Management

Middle managers had limited clarity on how to improve their departments and often lacked the experience or confidence to lead change. Many were in their first leadership roles, so they had not yet developed the skills needed to manage performance, drive improvement, or challenge inefficiency.

Because goals were unclear and senior leaders were so involved in execution, middle management had little room to develop ownership. This made the organisation even more dependent on the CEO and SMT for everyday decisions.

### 4.3 Processes & Procedures

Processes and procedures existed in some areas, but they were not well organised, used consistently, or enforced effectively. Tools such as JIRA and Confluence were not supporting the business properly, so process discipline remained weak even where documentation existed.

This created a gap between what the business said it did and what it actually did. That gap increased operational risk and made it harder for leadership to trust what was happening across the organisation.

## 4.4 Product

Product direction was reactive rather than strategic. There was no clear product owner, no obvious roadmap discipline, and no consistent link between product decisions and business goals. As a result, features risked becoming bloated or drifting away from their intended purpose.

The leadership bottleneck made this worse. When the CEO and senior team were pulled into product decisions too early or too often, product direction became driven by immediate opinions rather than structured planning.

## 5. Detailed Findings

### 5.1 Communication

Communication was one of the clearest problem areas. Information was scattered across meetings, Slack, and other chat tools, with too much important detail living in places that were not reliable as records of truth. This made it hard to track decisions, follow progress, or ensure accountability.

Meetings were too frequent, often poorly prepared, and generally owned by senior management rather than by the people closest to the work. That signalled that the CEO and SMT still owned the operating rhythm of the business, which undermined ownership at lower levels and reinforced dependence on the top team.

### 5.2 Product Development & Management

There was no strong product leadership function in place. Product decisions seemed to be made ad hoc, with little visible strategy and weak alignment to business priorities. That meant the team was not consistently building toward a clearly defined outcome.

This was a strategic weakness, not just an operational one. Without a product owner or project discipline, the CEO and senior team remained the final filter for too many decisions, which slowed execution and prevented them from focusing on higher-value leadership work.

### 5.3 JIRA Configuration

JIRA was being used as a set of status labels rather than as a workflow engine. There was little evidence of properly designed or enforced workflows, and updates were often missing or out of date. That reduced trust in the system and made progress tracking unreliable.

The issue here was not the tool itself, but how it reflected the wider leadership model. If the CEO and SMT had to keep chasing updates manually, that was a sign the system was not designed to enable delegation, accountability, or scalable management.

## 5.4 Confluence Configuration

Confluence should have functioned as the business's source of truth, but it was not being used that way. Important information was spread across documents, spreadsheets, emails, and chat tools, which made it difficult for people to find what they needed.

Better use of Confluence would have reduced dependency on the senior team for answers. Instead of repeatedly asking the CEO or SMT for direction, teams could have relied on a structured system for goals, roadmaps, processes, and status visibility.

## 5.5 Task Management

Task management was fragmented across multiple tools and teams. There was no consistent company-wide standard, so ownership was unclear and senior management had to step in to make sure work got done properly.

This was one of the clearest signs that the CEO was a bottleneck. When the operating model depends on senior leadership constantly chasing tasks, the business is not really delegating — it is centralising control.

## 5.6 Messaging Tools

The business used multiple internal and external messaging tools, including Slack, WhatsApp, Skype, and Telegram, often across personal accounts. That created visibility problems, scalability problems, and potential compliance risks.

It also made handovers and incident management weak. A more structured approach would have allowed the business to record conversations centrally, protect continuity, and reduce reliance on individual memory or availability.

## 5.7 Management & Culture

The culture reflected the leadership model. Middle managers did not feel true ownership, roles were not clearly defined, and there was a strong sense that senior management retained control of the process, the vision, and even operational meetings.

This created a perception of micro-management, even where the intent may not have been to control everything. The result was a workforce that deferred upward, while the CEO and SMT were forced deeper into detail than was healthy for a growing business.

# 6. Recommendations

The key recommendation was to establish a clear mission, defined goals, and measurable KPIs that every team could align to. This would have given people a better sense of purpose and made it easier to decide what mattered and what did not.

The business also needed a complete overhaul of communication and tool usage. JIRA and Confluence needed to be used properly together, task management needed to be standardised, and product and project management capability needed to be introduced so the CEO and SMT could step back from operational chasing and focus on strategy.

Culturally, the organisation needed to shift from intervention to empowerment. The senior team had to listen more, delegate more, and allow managers to take ownership, while giving them the training and structure required to succeed.

## 7. Next Steps

The immediate next step was to define a clear business direction and align all initiatives to it. From there, the business could standardise how work was tracked, how communication flowed, and how leadership time was used.

The long-term objective was to move the CEO and senior team out of the bottleneck and into a true strategic leadership role. That shift would have improved speed, accountability, and confidence across the organisation, while creating the operating discipline needed for sustainable growth.

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