



# **Not All Transformations Are Equal: The GOLDCO Compass Guide to Successful Transformation**

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**GOLDCO**<sup>®</sup>

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The biggest mistake leaders make when facing a transformation isn't lack of commitment, investment, or even expertise. It's assuming they all work the same way. During the strategy design phase, most teams jump straight into defining the end state. But in doing so, they skip the most critical question: what kind of transformation are we actually facing?

After more than a decade of experience, we learned that no two initiatives are ever the same. Each transformation is an elaborate problem that requires its own tactical approach. Even so, some leaders use the same blueprint. While some might succeed, not all will reach their full potential since every dimension of the project brings forth new challenges and efforts. Therefore, identifying your transformation and defining the right strategy is key.

Additionally, the cost of a failed transformation is staggering. Not just in dollars, but in lost time, organizational momentum, and damage to your leadership credibility. When change begins with the wrong action plan, progress slows, teams lose focus, and your entire initiative risks fizzling out.

The scale of this challenge becomes clear when you look at how transformations actually happen. In my experience, a typical Transformation Office oversees 20+ initiatives distributed across five functional areas. Roughly 29% in organizational processes and people systems, 26% in digital transformation, 16% in commercial transformation, 13% in organizational transformation, 10% in operations, and 6% in corporate development.

Managing this diversity simultaneously creates unavoidable complexity. Yet the common impulse is to simplify, applying a single methodology across the board. The result is predictable misalignment. This landscape reveals the need for a more precise way to diagnose and navigate change, because each transformation unfolds differently.

So, what can we do? How can leaders begin to identify the most crucial parts of a transformation? **This framework provides a tool to evaluate your change initiative, categorize it appropriately, and apply the indispensable factors for success.** These range from the right combination of influence tactics to the instruments that will spark momentum in your organization. We've named this tool "The GOLDCO Compass".

Every transformation influences 4 organizational elements: Capabilities, Way of Work, Infrastructure, and Culture. But they do so in different ways. After analyzing 100+ of our projects a noticeable pattern emerged: transformations cluster into 3 distinct signatures based on the magnitude of change across these elements.

***"Each transformation is an elaborate problem that requires its own tactical approach."***

We named these archetypes according to what they fundamentally accomplish: the Foundational Shift reshapes who the organization is, the System Rewire redesigns how it operates, and the Capacity Builder expands what it can do.

**The GOLDCO Compass helps you identify the archetype that looks most like your transformation and outlines what it requires for the right execution.**

EXHIBIT 1: NAVIGATING THE GOLDCO COMPASS

STEP 1: CLARIFY/EVALUATE	STEP 2: ARCHETYPE/CATEGORIZE	STEP 3: STRATEGIZE
How does your transformation look?	Does it look like a Foundational Shift, System Rewire, or Capacity Builder?	How should your strategy look?
Which areas will your transformation impact the most?	What type of transformation are you actually facing?	Which success factors should you prioritize?

## II. NOT ALL CHANGE IS THE SAME - CLARIFY/EVALUATE

First, we must understand what each organizational element entails and what we refer to as **Capabilities, Way of Work, Infrastructure, and Culture**.

- **Capabilities** encompass the roles and skills required to execute the transformation. This includes upskilling existing employees, hiring new talent, or even creating new roles to fit your evolution.
- **Infrastructure** includes the systems, platforms, and physical or digital assets that keep the organization running. This ranges from light technology updates to complete redesigns of core operating systems.
- **Way of Work** describes the structures, governance mechanisms, and coordination processes that determine how teams make decisions. This reshapes authority, accountability, and how people collaborate.
- **Culture** represents the shared mindsets, behavioral norms, and employee readiness that determine whether people embrace or resist change. Cultural shifts involve rewiring how people think about their work and the organization's identity.

As mentioned above, these elements vary. They can have moderate, progressive, or even full-scale impact on your organization and therefore should be treated differently. Each degree of impact demands more energy, commitment, and organizational focus than the one before it, and every transformation touches all four elements, but not with equal force. By assessing where your initiative will create the highest intensity of change, you reveal which archetype you're facing, and which strategic approach you need.

**EXHIBIT 2: IMPACT LEVELS ACROSS ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS**

Element	Moderate Impact	Progressive Impact	Full-Scale Impact
Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing roles stay the same</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roles expand</li> <li>Upskilling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role evolution</li> <li>Creation of brand-new functions</li> <li>Redefinition of the workforce</li> </ul>
Way of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centralized decision making</li> <li>Informal adjustments to coordination</li> <li>Small tweaks in KPIs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distributed decision making</li> <li>Formalized operating models</li> <li>Alignment with existing processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reimagined authority structures</li> <li>New organizational structures</li> <li>Complete overhaul of metrics and accountability</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Light tool adoption</li> <li>Streamlined tweaks</li> <li>Short-term fixes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System integration</li> <li>Reengineering of workflows</li> <li>Mid-term enhancements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large-scale digital reinvention</li> <li>Ground-up redesign of processes</li> <li>Long-term scalable</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Change Mindset:</b> Minor adaptation</li> <li><b>Engagement &amp; Participation:</b> Awareness and compliance</li> <li><b>Leadership Sponsorship:</b> Symbolic endorsement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Change Mindset:</b> Moderate behavioral reinforcement</li> <li><b>Engagement &amp; Participation:</b> Active involvement</li> <li><b>Leadership Sponsorship:</b> Active role modeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Change Mindset:</b> Deep rewiring of beliefs and norms.</li> <li><b>Engagement &amp; Participation:</b> Co-ownership of change by employees.</li> <li><b>Leadership Sponsorship:</b> Leadership embedding cultural transformation into identity.</li> </ul>

### III. EACH TRANSFORMATION CREATES A UNIQUE PATTERN - ARCHETYPE/CATEGORIZE

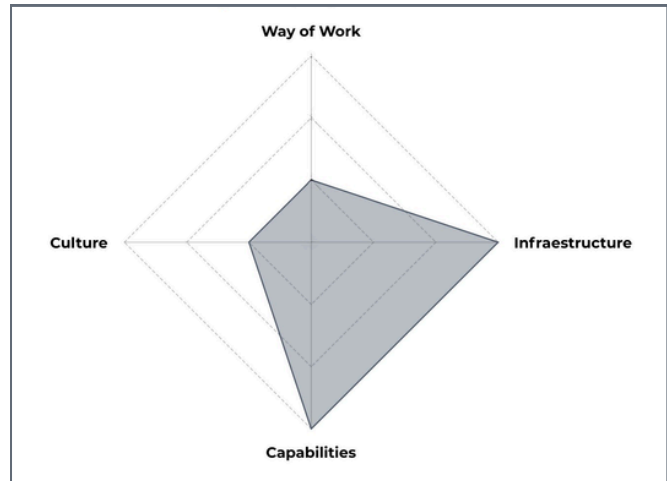
The Compass works by mapping the intensity of change, revealing the composition of your transformation and the areas it will have the biggest impact on. There are 3 most common archetypes we found to be prominent in our own projects. **The Capacity Builder, The System Rewire, and The Foundational Shift.** Each demands its own combination of leadership approach, influence tactics, risk management, and momentum generators. These are their most prominent characteristics:

***“Each degree of impact demands more energy, commitment, and organizational focus than the one before it, and every transformation touches all four elements, but not with equal force.”***

## THE CAPACITY BUILDER

- **Capabilities:** Specialist hiring & deep technical skill-building.
- **Infrastructure:** Large-scale systems and platform implementations.
- **Way of Work:** Involves moderate adjustments. Processes adapt to incorporate new capabilities, but governance structures remain stable.
- **Culture:** Minimal change. Incremental adaptation to new tools and ways of working, rather than undergoing a complete organizational shift.

EXHIBIT 3: THE CAPACITY BUILDER ARCHETYPE



### e.g. AI Pricing Engine in Retail

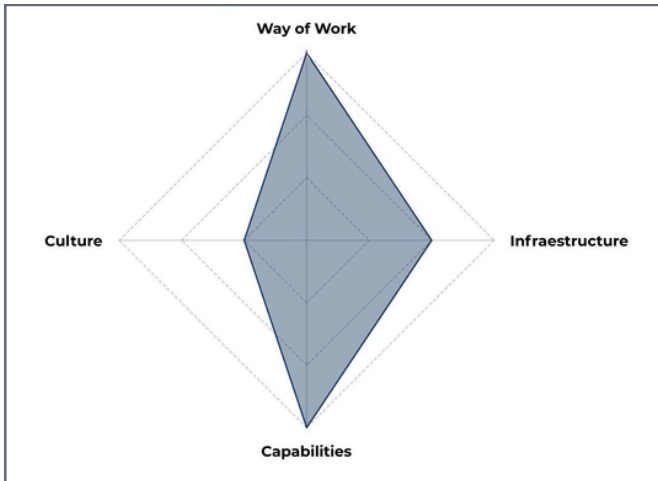
**Context:** A retail chain decides to implement a machine-learning-based pricing engine.

#### Impact Pattern:

- **Capabilities:** Hiring data scientists and significantly upskilling the revenue management team.
- **Infrastructure:** Implementing a new pricing platform and a data lake.
- **Way of Work:** Moderate adjustments to price-approval routines.
- **Culture:** Incremental changes; the commercial logic remains largely intact.

# THE SYSTEM REWIRE

EXHIBIT 4: THE SYSTEM REWIRE ARCHETYPE



- **Way of Work:** Distributed decision-making, formalized operating models, and complete workflow redesign.
- **Capabilities:** Focused reskilling and role redefinition to match new operating structures.
- **Infrastructure:** Sees low to medium change. Selective tools support new ways of working rather than wholesale platform replacement.
- **Culture:** Requires moderate behavioral reinforcement to support new collaboration patterns.

## e.g. Implementing IBP / Extended S&OP in a Consumer Goods Company

**Context:** A leading consumer goods company decides to implement an **Integrated Business Planning (IBP) / extended S&OP process**, aiming to establish a single decision-making rhythm across the organization.

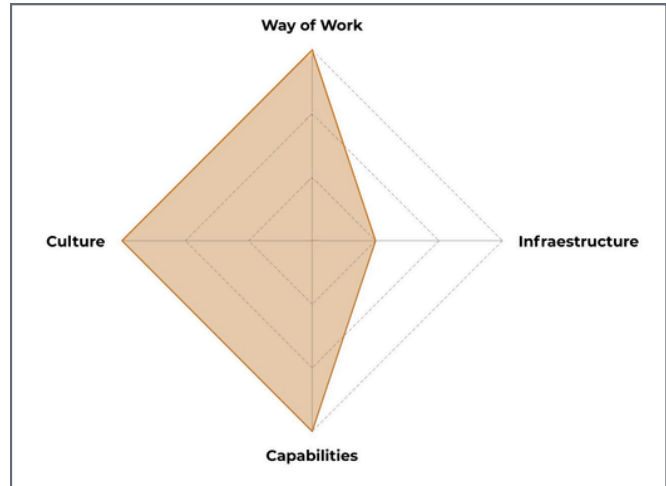
### Impact Pattern:

- **Way of Work:** Complete redesign of forums, agendas, and demand–supply decision ownership.
- **Capabilities:** Reskilling in planning, business, and analytics; creation of new roles such as “IBP Lead.”
- **Infrastructure:** Medium-level tools (APS/ERP upgrades), but not a new core system.
- **Culture:** Behavioral reinforcement to break down silos between Commercial, Supply Chain, and Finance

## THE FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT

- **Culture:** Deep rewiring of beliefs and norms.
- **Way of Work:** Reimagined authority structures, new organizational models, completely overhauled accountability systems.
- **Capabilities:** Role evolution, creation of brand-new functions, and workforce redefinition to match the new identity.
- **Infrastructure:** Typically follows rather than leads, with systems supporting the transformed organization rather than driving the change itself.

EXHIBIT 5: THE FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT ARCHETYPE



### e.g. Transitioning from Product-Centric to Customer-Centric

**Context:** A company seeking to regain differentiation and sustainable growth decides to shift from a product-centric model focused on internal efficiency to a customer-centric model centered on understanding and maximizing customer value across the full lifecycle.

#### Impact Pattern:

- **Way of Work:** Redesign of the commercial and operating model around customer journeys, lifecycle management, and cross-functional ownership of customer outcomes.
- **Capabilities:** Reskilling in customer insights, journey design, VOC analytics, and creation of new roles such as Customer Success, Journey Owners, and Experience Leads.
- **Infrastructure:** Deployment of CRM upgrades, customer data platforms, and omnichannel analytics tools; integration of siloed customer data across functions.
- **Culture:** Transformation of core beliefs and identity—shifting from “we sell products” to “we solve customer problems”; strong leadership role-modeling to embed a customer-first mindset.

## IV. CHOOSING THE RIGHT APPROACH - STRATEGIZE

Your transformation strategy wins or loses based on Influence, Leadership, Risk Management, and Inertia Generators. Each archetype activates these levers in its own way and addresses a critical dimension of execution. Influence determines how change moves through your organization, Leadership sets the tone and engagement model, Risk Management addresses the threats specific to your transformation type, and Inertia Generators ensure momentum doesn't fade after launch. Aligning these four components to your archetype is what separates strategy from execution.

EXHIBIT 6: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS BY TRANSFORMATION ARCHETYPE

STRATEGIZE				
How should your strategy look?				
ARCHETYPE	SUCCESS FACTORS			
	INFLUENCE	LEADERSHIP	RISK MANAGEMENT	INERTIA GENERATOR
CAPACITY BUILDER	<b>Local &amp; Controlled:</b> led by technical functions & specialists	<b>Hierarchical &amp; Balanced:</b> operational discipline with enabling support	<b>Robust:</b> heavy execution + integration controls	<b>Authority/process:</b> redesign, incentive alignment
SYSTEM REWIRE	<b>Transversal:</b> cross-function networks spread practices	<b>Balanced:</b> directive clarity + coaching	<b>Adaptive-structured:</b> mitigate adoption/skill risks	<b>Metrics &amp; Loops:</b> retros, team accountability
FOUNDATIONAL SHIFT	<b>Systemic:</b> influence cascades across the whole org	<b>Soft:</b> vision-setting & participatory	<b>Flexible &amp; Adaptive:</b> focus on alignment & resistance mgmt	<b>Cultural Reinforcement:</b> rituals, symbols, champions

### EACH STRATEGY TAKES A DIFFERENT FORM IN PRACTICE:

#### Capacity Builder

- **Goal:** Build new skills and technical capabilities.
- **Strategy:** Local influence, coaching leadership, manage adoption risks, use metrics and quick wins to build momentum.

#### System Rewire

- **Goal:** Redesign core processes and cross-functional governance.
- **Strategy:** Cross-functional influence, directive leadership, manage integration risks, enforce rhythms and accountability loops.

#### Foundational Shift

- **Goal:** Transform identity, culture, and operating model.
- **Strategy:** Systemic influence, visionary leadership, manage cultural risks, anchor change with deep cultural reinforcement.

## WHY GETTING IT RIGHT MATTERS

**In our experience, organizations that define the correct transformation strategy capture between 15-20 percentage points in additional economic value and reduce time to value by 20-30%.**

They avoid the months, or even years wasted pursuing misaligned plans that must eventually be abandoned or redesigned. This precision translates directly to improved ROI. Resources flow toward the right levers rather than being dispersed across generic factors that don't match the transformation's actual requirements. Strategic alignment also optimizes both capital and operating expenses: CAPEX investments in infrastructure, systems, and tools get right-sized to the initiatives' needs rather than over-invested or under-resourced.

The compounding effect of these improvements, faster results, better resource allocation, and sustained momentum, enhances overall return on equity. Your transformation will deliver the decisive outcomes that drive performance rather than consuming resources without material impact.

## V. PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Based on experience, one of the biggest challenges leadership teams are facing is diagnosis. The Transformation Compass provides the diagnostic precision leaders need: a systematic way to identify which archetype they're facing so they can align it with the right approach.

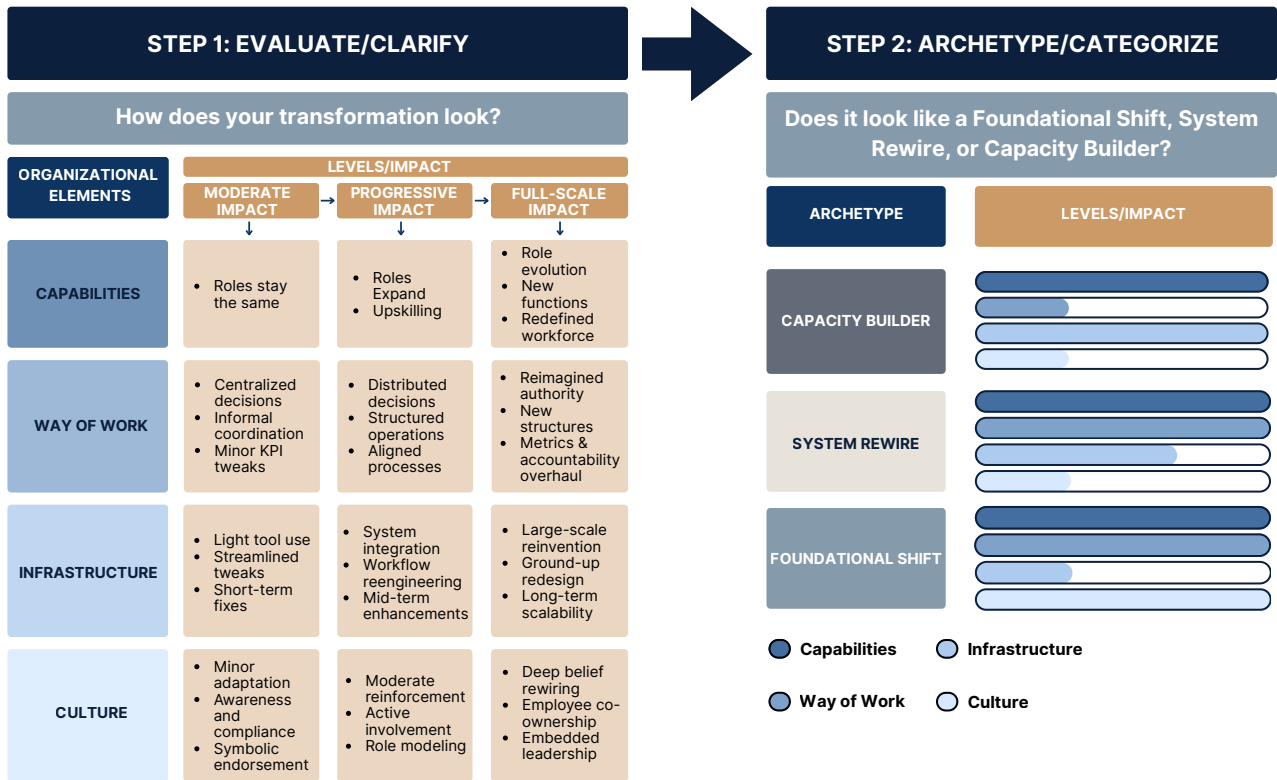
Clarify, Archetype, and Strategize, however, is only the beginning. Lasting transformation require catalysts that will assist your initiative. That means establishing a dedicated Transformation Office to coordinate across functions and ensure coherence; defining clear KPIs that measure actual progress; and implementing robust control mechanisms, governance structures, and feedback loops that allow leadership to monitor performance, conduct regular checkpoints, and course-correct when execution drifts from strategy.

Not all transformations are equal, so your strategy can't be either. Define your transformation first: use the Compass to identify your archetype with precision. Then match your strategic approach, calibrating Influence, Leadership, Risk Management, and Inertia Generators accordingly. Finally, maintain your transformation through robust control mechanisms.

It's not just about change, it's about direction. So, invest your efforts deliberately and anticipate any problem that might arise. Look to the Transformation Compass as a guide and make your initiative last.

# VI. THE COMPLETE FRAMEWORK

EXHIBIT 7: THE GOLDCO COMPASS FRAMEWORK



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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