Day One is not the **finish line**

Completion creates ownership. It does not create readiness.

Most M&A activity starts with a clear rationale.

Growth. Scale. Capability. Simplification. Value creation.

The deal may make sense. The timetable may be clear. The leadership team may know what the acquisition, integration, divestment or carve-out is meant to achieve.

But that does not mean the business is ready.

In our experience, the hardest M&A challenges are rarely caused by poor intent. They come from the practical detail being understood too late.

> **What must work on Day One?**
>
> **Who owns the key decisions?**
>
> **Which systems and data are critical?**
>
> **What can wait?**
>
> **Which clients, staff and suppliers are affected?**
>
> **What happens if a key dependency slips?**
>
> **Who is keeping the whole thing joined up?**

These are not minor delivery questions. They determine whether the deal works in practice.

At CBO, we see Day One not as the finish line, but as the first real test of whether the business is ready.

The issue: Most organisations have a deal plan. Fewer have a readiness plan.

A deal plan gets the transaction to completion.

A readiness plan makes sure the business can operate when it gets there.

The gap between the two is where pressure builds.

Teams are busy. Workstreams are moving. Meetings are happening.

But systems may not be ready. Data may not be trusted. Suppliers may be waiting for direction. Clients may receive mixed messages. Decisions may take too long. Governance may not be strong enough to resolve issues quickly.

None of this is unusual.

It is what happens when readiness is left until the business is already under pressure.

Four readiness risks we see most often

1. The operating model is not clear enough to run

A structure chart is not an operating model.

People need to know how the business will actually work after completion: who owns decisions, who owns services, what changes immediately, what stays the same, and how issues will be escalated.

If this is unclear, workstreams make assumptions. Assumptions create delay, duplication and rework.

CBO view: An operating model should help people run the business. If it does not do that, it is not finished.

2. Systems and data are treated as IT tasks

Systems and data are often on the critical path, but they are business readiness issues.

They affect finance, operations, client service, risk, compliance, reporting, controls and management information.

The key questions are practical: which systems are essential, who needs access, what data is needed, has it been checked, and which controls rely on it?

CBO view: If systems and data are not ready, the business may not be ready either.

3. Workstreams are active, but not joined up

M&A creates a lot of activity. That does not always mean delivery is under control.

Technology may be waiting for operating model decisions. HR may need role clarity. Finance may need system decisions. Client, risk and supplier teams may all be waiting for direction.

The biggest risks often sit between workstreams, not within them.

CBO view: A busy plan is not the same as controlled delivery.

4. The business is expected to absorb too much change

M&A is rarely delivered by people with nothing else to do.

The same teams supporting the transaction are often still running the business, serving clients, managing suppliers, handling risk and dealing with day-to-day operational demands.

If the pressure is not managed, clients and colleagues can experience confusion, inconsistency or a drop in service quality.

CBO view: The business has to keep working while the change is delivered.

What good readiness looks like

Day One readiness does not mean everything is finished.

Some activity will move into a 30, 60 or 100-day plan. Some arrangements may be transitional. Some decisions will be phased. That is normal.

Good readiness means being clear on three things:

- what must be ready for Day One;
- what can safely move into a later phase;
- what needs active management because it could affect clients, people, service or control.

Readiness questions for leadership teams

Before Day One, leadership teams should be able to answer:

- ☐ What must be ready on Day One?
- ☐ What can safely move into a later phase?
- ☐ Who owns the key decisions?
- ☐ Which dependencies could delay readiness?
- ☐ Where are the biggest risks to clients, service or control?
- ☐ Which systems, data and reports are business-critical?
- ☐ What do staff, clients and suppliers need to know?
- ☐ What happens if a critical supplier, system or data activity slips?
- ☐ Who is managing the whole delivery picture?

If these answers are unclear, the organisation may have a deal plan, but not yet a readiness plan.

The CBO view

M&A succeeds when the practical detail is understood, planned and delivered.

That is where CBO helps.

We bring structure, leadership and delivery focus to the operational work behind the transaction. We help clients understand what needs to be true for Day One, where the risks and dependencies sit, and what needs to happen to keep the business moving.

Our approach is practical.

We work with leadership and delivery teams to bring clarity to the work, create the right governance, manage the critical path and make sure decisions turn into action.

M&A and Integration

Working through an acquisition, integration or carve-out?

M&A creates a lot of moving parts. CBO helps bring structure to the practical work that needs to happen - across people, systems, data, governance, clients, suppliers and delivery.

We can help you assess readiness, shape the delivery approach, manage dependencies and keep the business moving while the change is delivered.

Quote from one of our clients:

"A huge thanks to all involved. An excellent nine months of work, we said at the start that the most important thing was to insulate the business and ensure continuity throughout. I am amazed at how well this was executed. Top job."

COO - Global Trust & Fiduciary Organisation

Need a clearer route to Day One?

The deal may be agreed, but the delivery still needs to land. CBO helps bring structure to the practical work, the decisions, dependencies, systems, data and people that determine whether the business is ready.

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About CBO

CBO is a Channel Islands-based business transformation consultancy helping organisations turn strategy into practical delivery.

We support clients across project delivery, business analysis, change management, data and technology-enabled transformation - bringing structure, senior experience and hands-on support to complex change.

We are at our best in regulated, data-rich and client-sensitive environments, where delivery needs to be controlled, practical and focused on real business outcomes.

Get in touch

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