



People Innovations

SCALE WITH SOUL

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FOUNDER REALITY CHECK

EXISTENCE

VS

EXCELLENCE

SURVIVAL MODE



CONSTANT FIRE FIGHTING



CHASING FUNDING



PUTTING BUTTS IN SEATS, FAST TO KEEP UP



CULTURE FORMS AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT



SCALING WITH INTENTION



CLARITY THAT FUELS PERFORMANCE



STRONG LEADERSHIP AT EVERY LEVEL



INSPIRED TEAM ROWING IN THE SAME DIRECTION



CULTURE SERVES AS A GROWTH ENGINE





THE TRAP

- Default: Many founders hire HR too early → payroll & policies, but no foundation for scale
- Whoops: Later they bring in a band-aid consultant to fill strategy gap (too late) → short-term engagements don't solve long-term problems
- The Result: wasted money, misalignment, disengagement, and stalled growth

Culture isn't a cost to minimize; it's rocket fuel for scaling.



**YOU CAN
EXIST WITHOUT IT...
BUT AT WHAT COST?**



THE COST

EXISTENCE

✘ TURNOVER → lost speed + credibility



✘ LEADERSHIP BURNOUT → founder firefighting



✘ LOSS OF INVESTOR TRUST → fixing later costs more than building right





CULTURE AS AN ROI ENGINE

EXCELLENCE

WHAT SHOULD
FOUNDERS
BE THINKING
ABOUT?



ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TOP
TALENT THROUGH GROWTH



BUILDING LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT &
DECISION-MAKING CLARITY



STRENGTHENING YOUR BRAND AS A
TALENT DESTINATION



INSPIRING INVESTOR CONFIDENCE





**THE MESSY MIDDLE
GROUND OF GROWTH.
WHAT NOBODY
WARNS YOU ABOUT.**



THE MESSY MIDDLE

The Founder Bottleneck

- 80-150 people
- Founder still carries the culture
- Managers promoted on grounds of being excellent in their craft (not excellent leadership capability)
- Values sound good, but aren't grounded yet

The Inconsistency Creep

- 150 - 300 people
- Managers interpret values differently
- Performance tolerance widens
- Feedback becomes uneven

The Fragmentation Risk

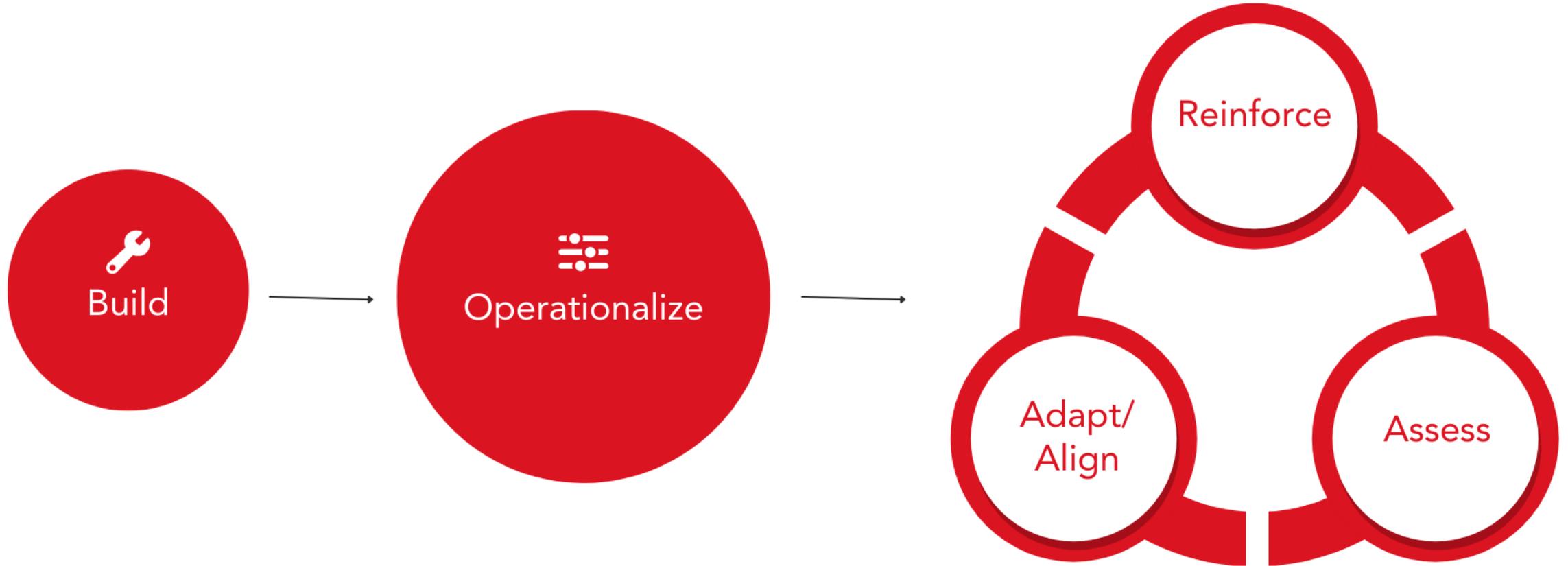
- 300 - 600 people
- Subcultures form
- Politics appear
- Original identity starts to blur



**FOUNDERS CAN'T WIN
WITH STRATEGY ALONE.
YOU NEED BELIEF.**



THE PEOPLE INNOVATIONS FRAMEWORK





Culture Only Scales if it Shows Up Here



- Who gets hired and why?
- How do you onboard?
- How do managers give feedback?
- Who gets promoted?
- Who gets tolerated?
- What gets rewarded?

Assess



If You're 100-300 People, Do These 5 Things



- Define leadership expectations before you scale managers

- Make values behavioural and measurable, not just inspirational

- Remove misaligned high performers early

- Build manager capability before adding layers

- Decide on what will never be compromised



PROOF IN PERFORMANCE



- Pre-IPO to IPO within 1 year of joining
- Global expansion and culture built to scale (150 to 3500+ in 4 years)
- People-focused systems that support rapid growth



- Brought in by Battery Ventures prior to funding round to assess & create a plan for the talent and shape the culture
- Built values-driven high performance elite cyber security team
- Founded, scaled and acquired by Symantec in 4 years; culture was core to the acquisition value



- Scaled from 75 to 2500+ people
- IPO in 2025, scaled to \$3B in market cap
- 14+ year winner of “Best Places to Work” awards highlighting a culture that performed at scale

The common thread? Culture and belief built the engine for scale.



**THE BEST TIME TO BUILD YOUR
CULTURAL FOUNDATION WAS
YESTERDAY.**

THE SECOND BEST TIME IS TODAY.