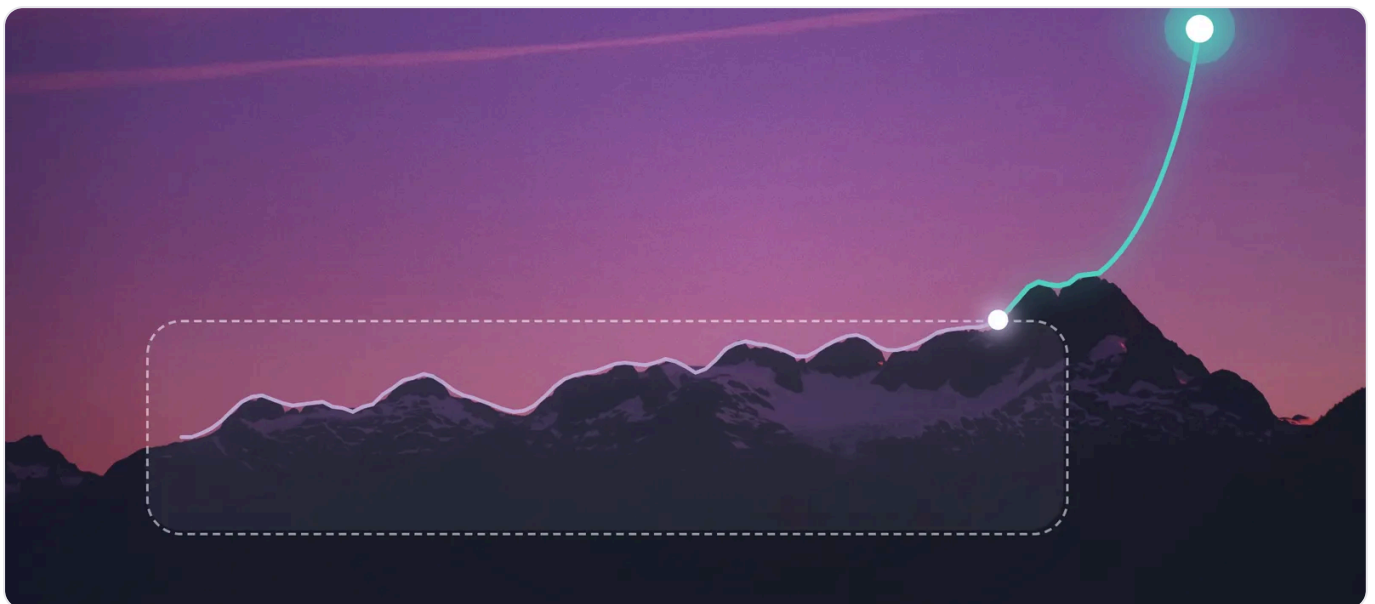


THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Five Signs Your Transformation Has Outgrown a Consulting Platform (Wave, ARC, KEY)

Transformation has stopped being something you do once. Here is how to tell when the platform your consulting firm left behind can no longer keep up.

Ayesha Khan | October 16, 2026



Transformation has stopped being something you do once. Here is how to tell when the platform your consulting firm left behind can no longer keep up.

The shift to always-on transformation

You are keeping the transformation capability, and that is the right call.

The capability includes your governance model, your business case standards, your stage gates and your KPI definitions. These can now be migrated to a platform you own. Plenty of companies have reached this same conclusion. KPMG surveyed 200 C-suite and senior executives at companies above \$1 billion in revenue and found that 60 percent describe transformation as continuous or nearly so, with two-thirds running three or more programs at the same time. Arthur D. Little's 2025 study of 400 senior transformation leaders found that 71% plan their transformation over four to six years.

Where the consulting platforms stop

Think back to the engagement that brought the tool in. A firm was hired to design the transformation, size the initiatives, set the gates and prove the value, and the platform came with them. It was built to run their method and set up by their team.

McKinsey's Wave, Bain's ARC and BCG's KEY are all strong for a single transformation. They were built to track benefits and link strategy to the P&L, and they do both well.

For always-on transformation, they fall short. Task and project tracking is limited, so the work moves to a second tool like Monday or Asana, and someone matches the two up every month. Governance across programs is limited, so someone builds that view by hand. Strategy execution AI is not built in from the foundation. And your program runs the firm's way, so changing the model means going back to them.

During the engagement, that makes sense. The consultants run delivery, the method and the setup. When they leave, the method becomes yours but the platform stays theirs.

The five signs

These signs tend to show up when the renewal comes around. The platform still works and executives still get their reports, but the day-to-day work is harder than it should be.

Small changes are hard to make

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- A dropdown you set up a year ago no longer fits the program. Changing it means a request to the firm or editing thousands of initiative records by hand. So the field stays wrong and people work around it.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A PLATFORM YOU OWN

- Your own admin changes fields and dropdowns. Edits don't disrupt anyone while they work, and nothing shows on a dashboard until you add it.

Changes to how you measure wait in the firm's queue

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- A new KPI or calculation goes back to the firm to build. You wait for their cycle, and you pay for the change.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A PLATFORM YOU OWN

- Your own admin builds calculated fields. One can build on another, so you can add new bands and ranges on top of what you already have.

Every initiative follows the same process, whatever its size

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- Every initiative sees every tab. The small ones fill in the same long form as the complicated ones, and it reads like a form at the doctor's office.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A PLATFORM YOU OWN

- The form adapts. A few upfront questions send a simple initiative to a short form and open the detailed sections only when they apply.

Governance happens at the gate and nowhere else

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- There is nowhere to do the work, so people update the record only when they need to pass a gate. The transformation office closes the gap by chasing initiatives one at a time.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A PLATFORM YOU OWN

- Tasks, boards, timelines, risks, actions, issues and interdependencies sit under the initiative. Status comes straight from the work already being done there.

Changing the operating model is off the table

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY

- The setup was custom-built for you and stays with the firm. So you keep the model you were given, even as the office takes on more of the business.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A PLATFORM YOU OWN

- You can reshape the model yourself. Users and permissions take about an hour to learn, and dashboards and workflows an afternoon. Complex calculations are the one area where teams still ask for help, using the same tools your admin has.

Exhibit 1. Five signs that a program has outgrown the platform it was given.

Four of these five come from one root cause: the model belongs to the firm. If two or three sound familiar, the platform is still doing the job it was built for. That job ended with the engagement.

When to stay where you are

Sometimes the answer is to stay.

If the engagement is still running, the firm maintains the setup as part of the work. If the program ends within the next year, moving costs more than it saves. And if you only need clearer reporting for the steering committee, Wave, ARC and KEY already do that well.

Moving makes sense when the office is becoming permanent, the model needs to change on your schedule, and your teams need one complete system.

Why a strategy execution platform

A strategy execution platform covers the full cycle on one data model. You break priorities into initiatives, rank them against capacity and expected value, run them through your stage gates, and track value against fixed targets with forecasts and actuals. More on that cycle here: [What is a strategy execution platform](#).

The part to test hardest is task and project tracking. That is where adoption is won or lost, because it decides whether initiative owners have a place to do the work. Ask to see Gantt charts, Kanban boards, task-level collaboration, and risks, actions, issues and interdependencies, all under the same initiative record as the benefits. If those live in a second tool, you have bought the same gap again.

You can build some of this into the tools you already have. But it takes expertise, time and custom work, and your team then has to maintain it. A strategy execution platform has it built in.

What the switch involves

The first concern I hear is losing what the engagement built. Most of it carries over, because the thinking was the hard part. Your stage gate model, your business case template, your benefit definitions, your KPI library and your initiative data all come across. Only the setup underneath gets rebuilt, and now it is yours to change.

Four things make the move go well.

REBUILD THE INTENT BEHIND EACH RULE.	Start from what each rule is meant to achieve and set up the new platform to do that. If you copy the old screens, you copy the old limits too, and pay for them twice.
MATCH THE RULES TO HOW YOUR TEAMS WORK TODAY.	Be honest about how comfortable your project managers are with gates, and set the rules to match. Add just enough controls to get the data you need. Your teams spend their time on the projects, and the data comes in because the work happens in one place.
AGREE ON TERMS IN THE FIRST MONTH.	Publish a list of old terms and their new names, train on it, and set a date after which only the new terms are used. People stop translating in their heads, and reports mean the same thing to everyone.
DESIGN THE REPORTING TOGETHER, IN A ROOM.	Your new platform team has never seen the old system. One working week with both on screen gets you dashboards your executives recognize on day one. Nobody spends the first quarter rebuilding them.

Starting from a template, a first version can run in days. Both tools run side by side for one cycle, so nothing is lost in the handover.

To see how Conductor runs strategy through to realized value, [book a demo](#).

Sources:

KPMG International, The new transformation agenda (December 2023), n=200 C-suite and senior executives at firms above \$1 billion in revenue.

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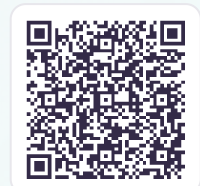
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READ ONLINE

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getconductor.com/resources/five-signs-your-transformation-has-outgrown-a-consulting-platform-wave-arc-key



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