This is my last blog post in my blog post series about three not-so-obvious threats to a successful integration. In today’s post I talk about a third risk to a successful integration- lack of solid integration methodology

According to Harvard Business Review reports, fewer than 30 percent of M&A’s achieve the value they expected to receive. This is in part due to lack of solid and proven methodology to orderly transfer knowledge from departing employees and integrate workforce, processes, compensation/benefits, technology systems, policies, etc.

*Employees, particularly those from the target company* *can sense when the integration program leaders don’t have a solid path to integrate the companies,* and they walk feeling like their new leaders don’t “have their act together.”

Below are key steps you can take before planning your integration:

1. **Gather Lessons Learned from Previous Deals**

Conduct a post-mortem from the last 2-3 deals to understand what went well and did not go well. Find out what your organization should start, stop and continue for the next deal.

Use the post-mortem feedback to develop recommendations for future M&A plans or an M&A playbook. I recommend getting feedback about what worked/didn’t work and what you should start/stop continue at the enterprise and functional/departmental level.

1:1 interviews with leaders or group discussions are great forums to collect feedback. However, the key is to pick the best approach that will encourage honest and open dialogue. If there is a lack of trust or sensitivity from past experiences, then 1:1 anonymous conversations between a third party and leaders may be ideal. Second, unless leaders incorporate lessons learned into future planning, people won’t speak up and give input.

1. **Create an M&A Playbook**

A successful M&A is grounded in a solid and proven methodology to guide decision-making through each phase of the transaction. *I recommend documenting your methodology in an “M&A playbook.”*

A playbook is a guide that contains your team’s strategy and templates. For each phase of the transaction (e.g. Due Diligence/Negotiations; Pre-Close to Day 1 and Post-Close) the playbook should contain the following items for each function (e.g. HR, Technology, Operations, Marketing, etc.)

* Finale deliverables and work product
* Resources/roles required to do the work with a description of each resources responsibilities
* Metrics for success
* Create a list of Integration criteria for each department- how do know when this phase is complete
* Lessons Learned

Keep in mind that each deal will be different, so you may need to adapt the standard playbook to address the unique complexities of each deal.

1. **Get the Resources You Need**

M&A’s are an all-consuming endeavor and require significant planning and attention to execution. This is not something that employees can squeeze in time to do in between their regular day job work. *Successfully integrating two organizations, requires takings some number of employees out of their role and dedicating them full time to leading the day-to-day integration planning and execution.*

Second, set expectations with department leaders about their role and responsibilities and time they’ll need to take to integrate people and processes across both companies. *At some points, department leaders could be spending upwards of 40% of their time on integration related activities.*

If you enjoyed this post, I’d be very grateful if you’d help it spread by emailing it to a friend, or sharing it on LinkedIn or Facebook. Thank you!