HICD FORWARD IN PRACTICE

From Business Integration to One Operating Company

An institutional case study showing how connected changes to workflow, authority, incentives, leadership, capability, and measurement produced measurable operating value.

Resource type	Institutional Case Study
Intended users	Corporate leaders, integration teams, transformation leaders, and OD practitioners
HICD Forward movement	All four movements
Related pillars	Performance, Human Architecture, Workflow, Alignment, Capability, Leadership, and Learning
Estimated use time	10 minutes

WHY THIS CASE MATTERS

Business integration becomes real only when the operating conditions around people, workflow, authority, leadership, and performance begin reinforcing one company rather than several legacy businesses.

The Case at a Glance

A regional business services company had grown through three acquisitions. Revenue and market reach increased, but the organization continued to operate as four separate businesses. Each unit retained its own processes, service standards, technology practices, management routines, and performance measures. Customers experienced inconsistent service, managers escalated routine decisions, and administrative duplication absorbed resources that should have supported growth.

Leaders initially described the problem as resistance to change. The HICD Forward lens reframed it as an operating performance problem. The company needed to align the conditions that shaped daily work, then test whether those changes produced faster, more reliable, and more efficient customer service.

The Operating Context

The acquisitions had been legally completed and the leadership structure had been announced, but integration had not reached daily operations. Employees still identified with the original businesses. Customer requests moved through different approval paths, service teams used different definitions of urgency, and managers relied on local reports that could not be compared across the company.

Integration Without One Operating Model

The same customer request could be completed in five days by one unit and more than two weeks by another. Finance, operations, sales, and human resources held different versions of performance data. Decisions involving more than one function moved slowly because authority had not been redesigned after the acquisitions. Local managers protected unit results even when doing so delayed work elsewhere in the company.

What Leaders Initially Assumed

Senior leaders believed employees needed stronger messages about collaboration and a shared culture. A company wide communication campaign and leadership workshops were proposed. These actions could support integration, but they would not remove duplicate workflows, conflicting incentives, unclear decision rights, or management routines that continued to reinforce the legacy businesses.

> KEY INSIGHT
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> **The company did not have a communication problem alone. It had an operating system that continued rewarding and reproducing separation.**

What This Meant in Practice

The work began by agreeing on the performance result that mattered: consistent, reliable, and efficient customer service across the entire company. This gave leaders a shared boundary for diagnosis. Instead of asking why employees resisted integration, the team asked which operating conditions made integrated performance difficult, slow, or unrewarded.

The Visible Performance Problem

The baseline showed that the expected benefits of integration were not reaching customers, employees, or the company cost base. Six measures defined the starting point.

14.2 DAYS Average time required to complete a customer request.	**62 PERCENT** Requests completed within the promised service period.
18 PERCENT Customer cases requiring correction or repeated work.	**10 DAYS** Average time for decisions involving more than one function.
54 PERCENT Employees who understood how their role supported company wide performance.	**$3.8 MILLION** Estimated annual cost of duplicate administration, reporting, and support activity.

CENTRAL MESSAGE

The pattern could not be explained by employee attitude alone. Service delay, rework, escalation, weak role clarity, and duplication all pointed to connected weaknesses in the operating environment.

What the HICD Forward Lens Revealed

The diagnosis focused on the conditions most likely to explain the performance gap. The pillars were used as one connected lens, not as separate assessments.

WORKFLOW Four business units used different customer processes, six approval routes, and more than twenty forms. Information was repeatedly transferred between systems, creating waiting time and rework.	**ALIGNMENT** Decision rights had not been redesigned after the acquisitions. Several leaders appeared responsible for customer performance, but no one owned the complete process from request to resolution.
HUMAN ARCHITECTURE Managers were measured against local unit results. The safest behavior was to protect local targets, even when company wide work slowed or customers experienced inconsistent treatment.	**LEADERSHIP** Senior leaders supported integration publicly but continued separate business unit reviews. Their questions, reports, and escalation habits reinforced the old organization.

Additional Conditions

- Capability: Employees understood their original jobs but had limited knowledge of the complete customer process, shared service standards, and cross unit issue resolution.
- Performance: The company tracked more than sixty measures but lacked one trusted view of completion time, reliability, rework, escalation, and customer experience.
- Learning: Previous integration problems were solved case by case. The company had no routine for testing changes, examining evidence, and adjusting the operating model.
- Performance and value: Leaders agreed that success would be judged through customer outcomes, operating consistency, decision speed, employee clarity, and reduced duplication.

DIAGNOSTIC CONCLUSION

The visible culture problem was being produced by workflow, authority, incentives, leadership routines, capability, and measurement that still favored the legacy businesses.

The Coordinated Response

The company designed one intervention package. Each action addressed a condition found in the diagnosis and included evidence that leaders could review during implementation.

Intervention component	What changed	Implementation evidence
Customer workflow	Four main process variations were replaced with one company wide value stream and a limited set of approved exceptions.	Cycle time by stage, rework, exceptions, and customer completion.
Decision rights	Routine customer issues and service recovery decisions were delegated to named roles with clear escalation boundaries.	Decision time, escalation volume, and unresolved ownership issues.
Performance expectations	Manager objectives combined company wide customer outcomes with local operating responsibilities.	Aligned objectives, review questions, and consequences for delayed handoffs.
Leadership routines	Separate unit reviews were replaced by one customer performance review focused on barriers, trends, and decisions.	Attendance, decisions completed, barriers removed, and repeated issues.
Capability support	Employees practiced the complete workflow, shared standards, exception handling, and cross unit problem solving.	Observed task performance, coaching needs, and first time quality.
Pilot and learning	The new model was tested in two units for eight weeks, then adjusted before wider implementation.	Pilot results, employee feedback, process changes, and scale decision.

Measurable Outcomes

Twelve months after wider implementation, the company recorded improvement across service, decision making, employee clarity, customer experience, and cost.

What Changed

- Customer work moved through one visible process with fewer handoffs and clearer exception rules.
- Managers had authority to resolve routine issues and were accountable for company wide outcomes.
- Leadership used shared evidence to remove barriers and correct recurring operating problems.

How to Interpret the Results

- The outcomes came from several connected changes, not from one isolated intervention.
- The pilot created evidence before the company committed to full implementation.
- Leadership review and common measures helped prevent a return to legacy routines.

Before and After

The figures below demonstrate the scale and range of results that a connected institutional response could reasonably target.

Performance measure	Before	After 12 months
Average request completion time	14.2 days	8.1 days
Completed within promised period	62 percent	88 percent
Cases requiring rework	18 percent	7 percent
Cross functional decision time	10 days	4 days
Employees clear about company wide contribution	54 percent	79 percent
Complaints about inconsistent service	Baseline	32 percent lower
Estimated annual duplication cost	$3.8 million	$1.4 million
Estimated annual savings achieved	Not applicable	$2.4 million

What This Case Demonstrates

The company did not need stronger messages about collaboration alone. It needed an operating environment in which integrated behavior was required, supported, measured, and reinforced. Corporate integration became real when workflow, authority, incentives, leadership routines, capability, and performance measures began supporting one operating company.

HICD FORWARD CONNECTION

Movement 1 aligned leaders around the customer performance gap. Movement 2 revealed the operating conditions producing fragmentation. Movement 3 translated those findings into one connected intervention package. Movement 4 used pilot evidence, leadership review, and performance signals to adjust and sustain the new model.

Questions for Your Institution

- Where do legacy processes, measures, or incentives continue to reproduce separation?
- Who owns the complete customer or service outcome across functional boundaries?
- What leadership routines reinforce the operating model you say you want?
- Which two or three measures would show that integration is improving real performance?

About This Case

This case study presents realistic institutional conditions, decisions, interventions, and illustrative outcomes. It demonstrates how the HICD Forward approach can be applied to a common corporate performance challenge and is not presented as a verified account of a specific client engagement.

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