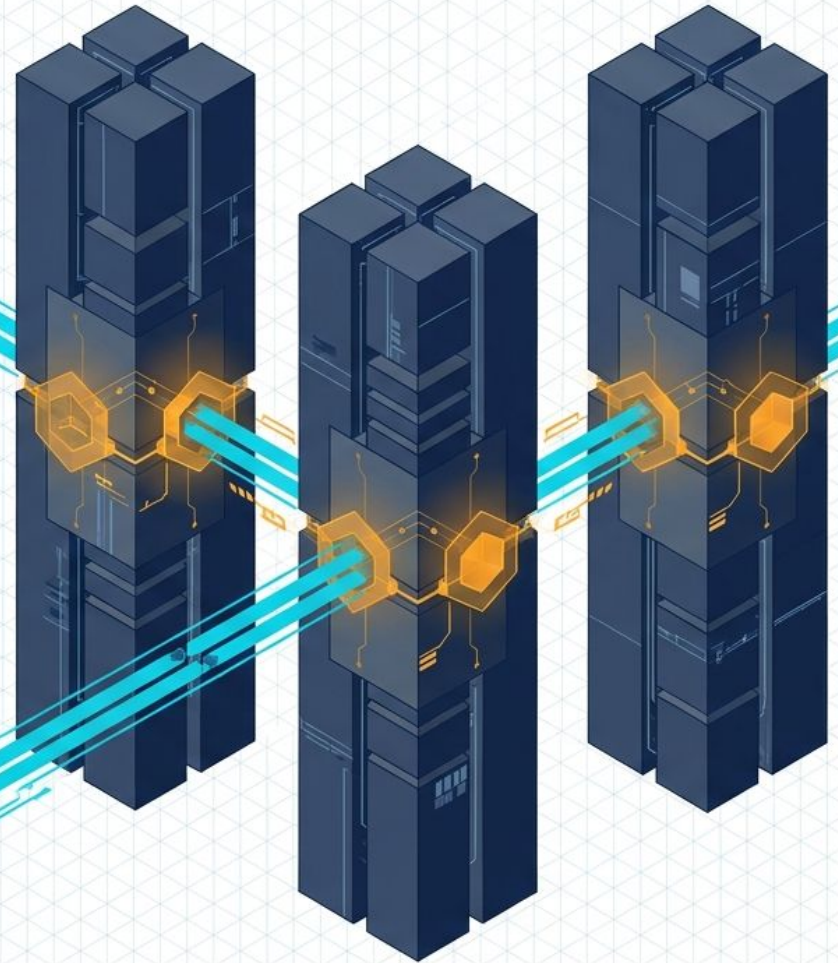


People Operations Is Strategic Infrastructure, Not a Rebrand

An architectural blueprint for horizontal integration, enterprise reach, and system-level HR orchestration.



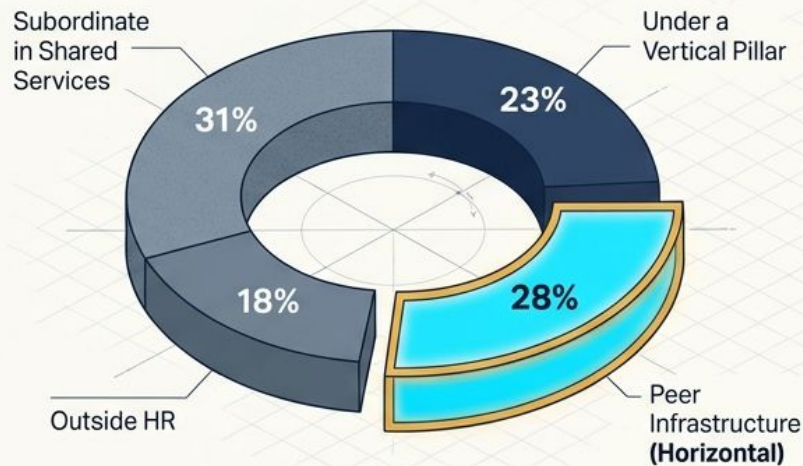
Renaming Shared Services Does Not Alter Structural Physics



The Illusion

Adoption of the term People Operations is accelerating (47% of organizations use it), but when positioned under a vertical pillar, the function simply inherits work other teams reject.

The Reality



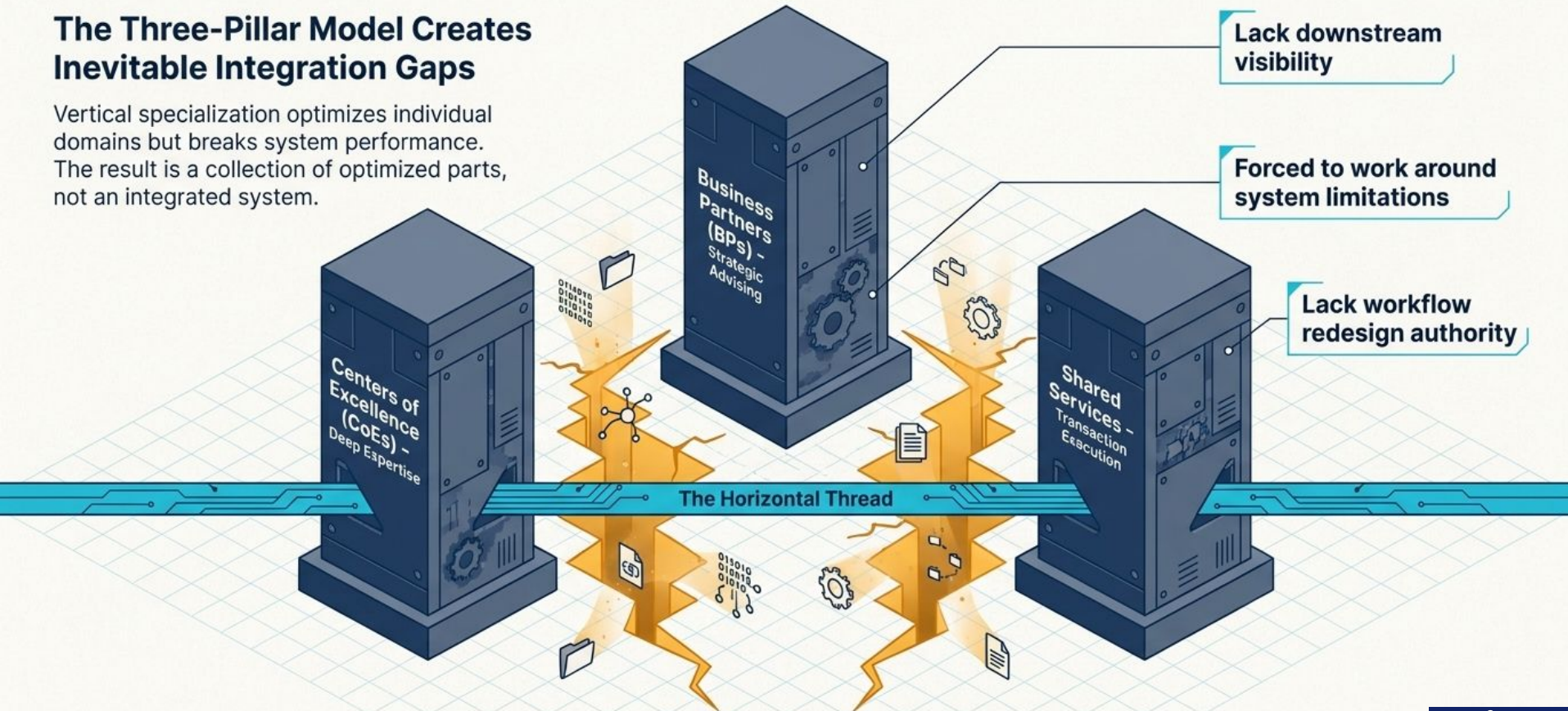
“We called it People Operations, but we didn’t change what they could touch or how decisions got made. So they became better at processing transactions, but they couldn’t fix why we had so many transactions in the first place.”

— HR Leader, Professional Services (CIPD, 2024)

The Integration Gap Diagram

The Three-Pillar Model Creates Inevitable Integration Gaps

Vertical specialization optimizes individual domains but breaks system performance. The result is a collection of optimized parts, not an integrated system.



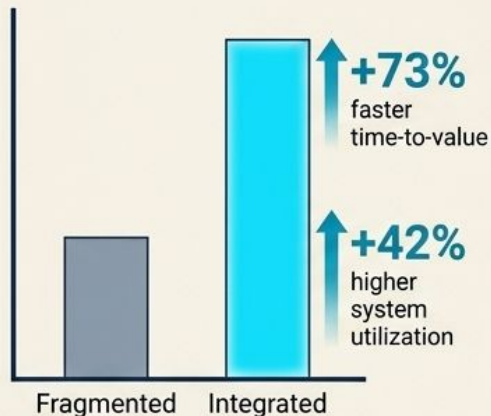
Quantifying the Cost of Structural Misalignment

Capacity Drain



Total HR function capacity consumed by rework, workarounds, and coordination overhead. Equal to 15-25 FTEs in a 100-person team.

Tech Implementation Drag



Organizations with dedicated integration functions achieve 73% faster time-to-value and 42% higher system utilization.

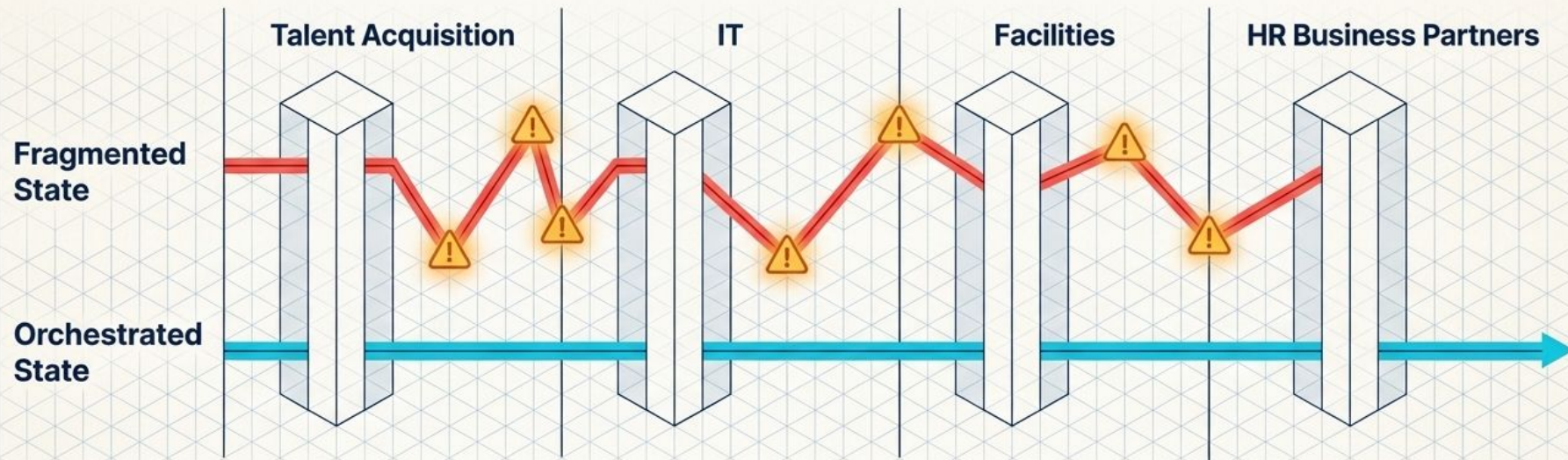
Data Integrity Failure



Error rate in employee records without horizontal data governance, risking compliance and analytics reliability (reducible to 3-5% with integration).

Horizontal Thread

The Human Cost of Fragmented Architecture



Stats



4-6

4-6 Hours/Week:

Time line managers spend navigating HR processes.



22%

Lower Satisfaction:

Correlated with fragmented delivery models.



18%

Higher Admin Burden:

Perception of disorganized internal services.

Quote box

"If they can't get onboarding right after doing it thousands of times, why would I trust them to get promotion decisions or compensation equity right?"

— Technology Professional

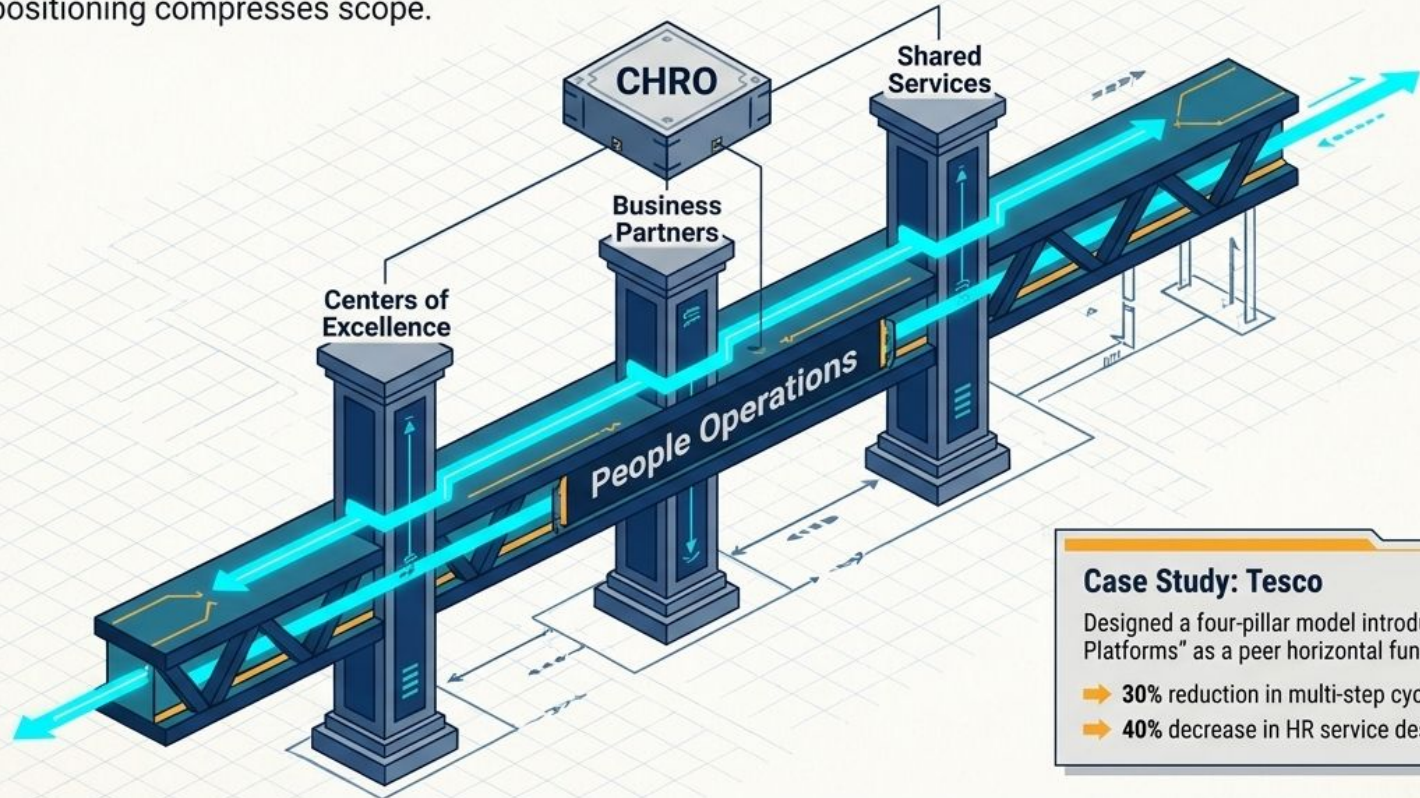
The Paradigm Shift: Shared Services vs. People Operations

Horizontal Thread

	Traditional Shared Services	Strategic People Operations
Primary Goal	Cost reduction & efficiency	Process innovation & experience orchestration
Mandate / Scope	Execute isolated transactions	Orchestrate end-to-end workflows
Structural Placement	Subordinate execution arm	Peer-level horizontal infrastructure
Required Capabilities	Operational discipline, volume management	Systems thinking, tech architecture, process design
Tech Ownership	System administrators	Architectural designers & data stewards

Establishing the Peer-Level Mandate

Effective horizontal functions require boundary-spanning authority.
Subordinate positioning compresses scope.



Case Study: Tesco

Designed a four-pillar model introducing "People Platforms" as a peer horizontal function.

- ➔ 30% reduction in multi-step cycle times.
- ➔ 40% decrease in HR service desk volume.

Core Capability 1: Owning the Connective Technology Architecture

Integration requires dedicated capability, not goodwill coordination.

When each vertical team selects tools independently, the result is platform proliferation and manual reconciliation.

People Ops must hold architectural authority over tool selection and data governance to prevent “shadow IT”.



Case Study: NatWest Group

Made digital technology capability foundational to People Operations, leading enterprise platform selection and enforcing canonical data models.



60%

reduction in platform implementation timelines.

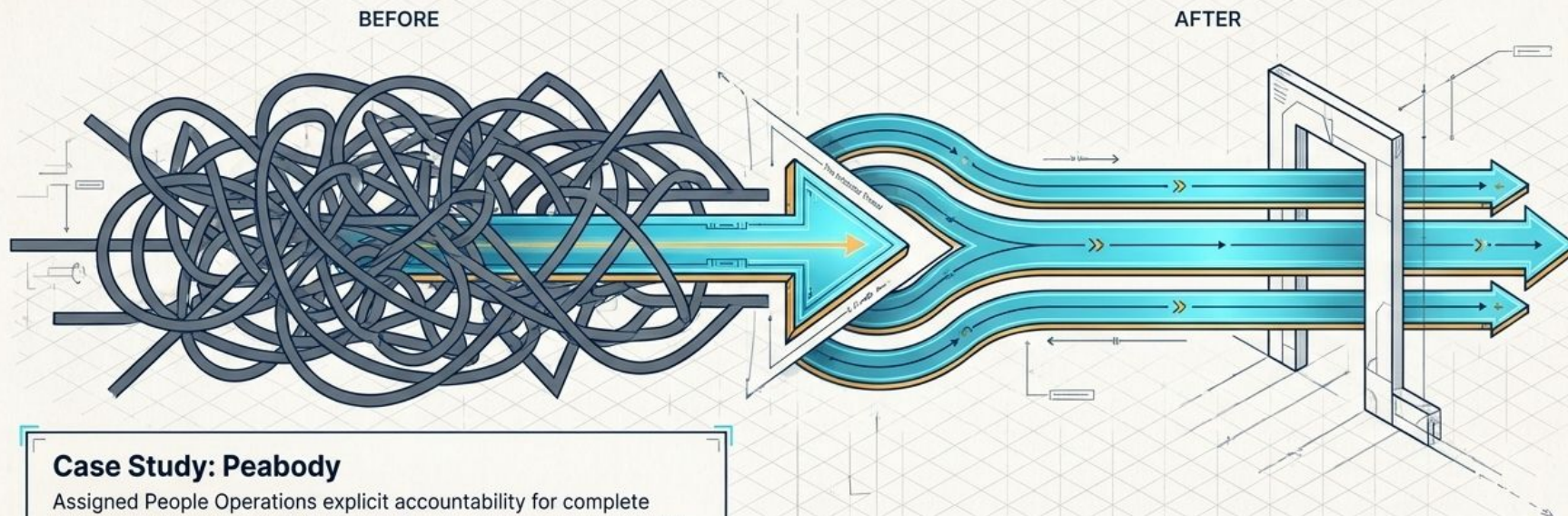


45%

improvement in data accuracy across systems.

Core Capability 2: Driving End-to-End Process Redesign

Early-stage shared services focus on transaction efficiency. Mature People Operations shifts to process innovation: eliminating waste, simplifying experiences, and redesigning workflows before digitizing them.



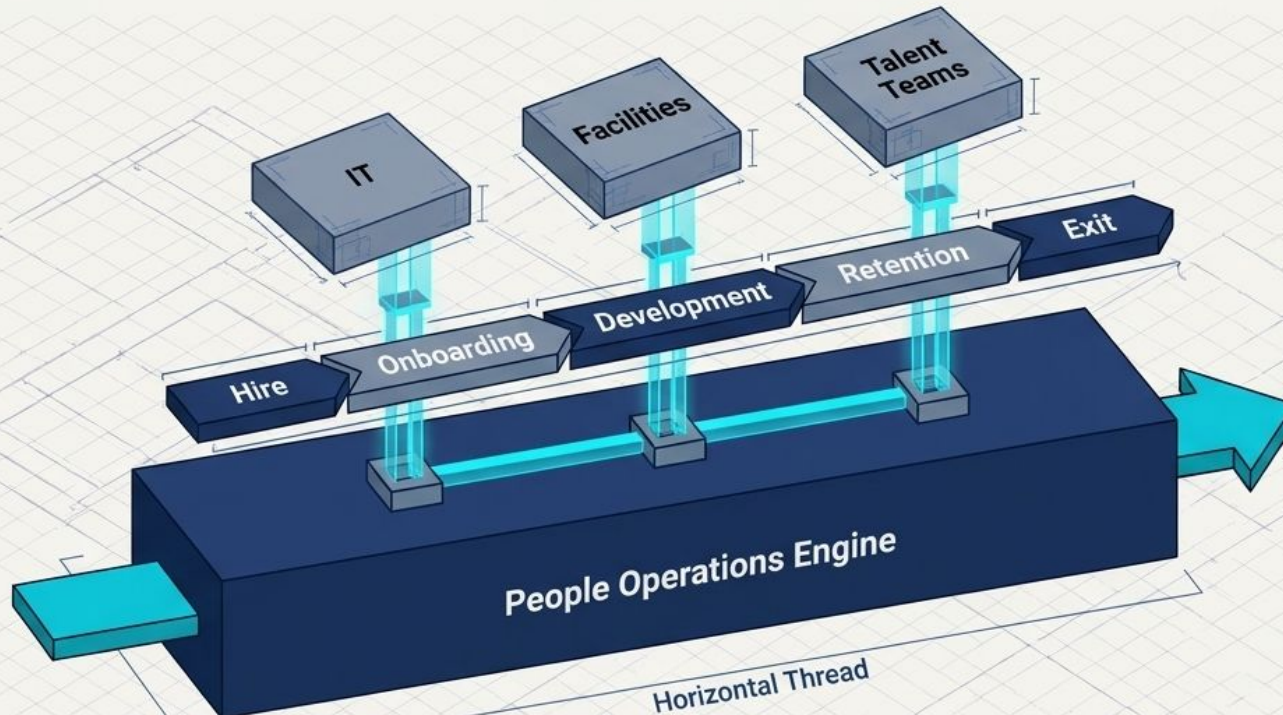
Case Study: Peabody

Assigned People Operations explicit accountability for complete process performance, utilizing cross-functional improvement teams and pilot-iterate-scale methodologies.

- 35% reduction in time-to-hire through workflow redesign.
- 40% decrease in leave administration queries.

Core Capability 3: Engineering the Employee Experience

Experience quality is driven by process consistency, not program generosity.
Orchestrating this requires mapping critical journeys across siloed departments.



Case Study: Adobe

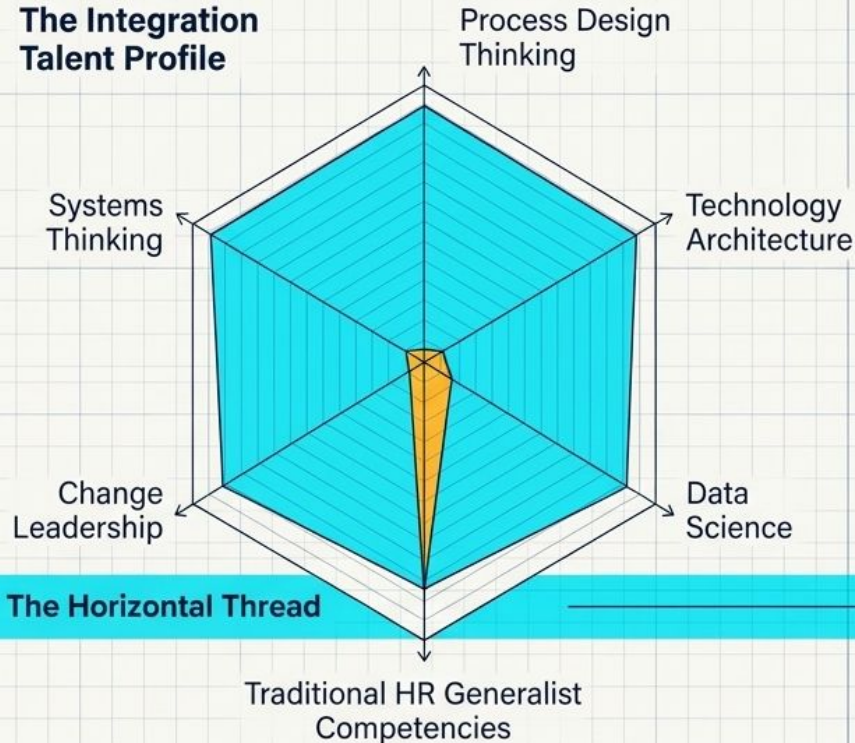
Created **Employee Experience & Operations**. Mapped journeys and orchestrated cross-functional teams to redesign onboarding, shifting paperwork to pre-hire.

» Outcomes:

- 50% reduction in manager administrative time.
- Accelerated new hire time-to-productivity by exactly three weeks.

Assembling a Multidisciplinary Integration Team

The Integration Talent Profile

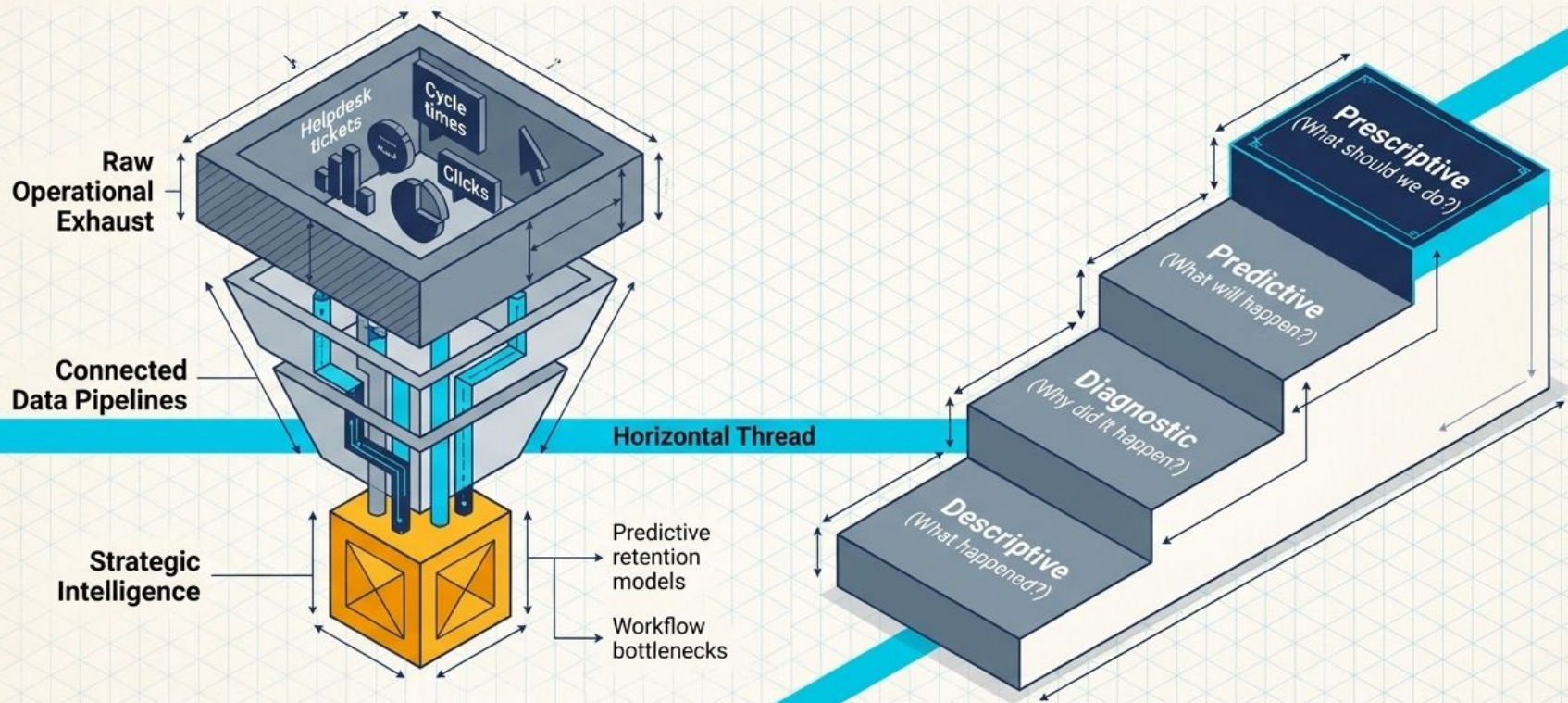


Transaction excellence and system integration require fundamentally different capabilities. Organizations that simply promote Shared Services leaders and expect architectural judgment typically fail to realize People Operations value.

Case Study: Microsoft. Deliberately hired data scientists, research methodologists, and technology architects for their People Analytics & Insights organization rather than recruiting primarily from traditional HR backgrounds.

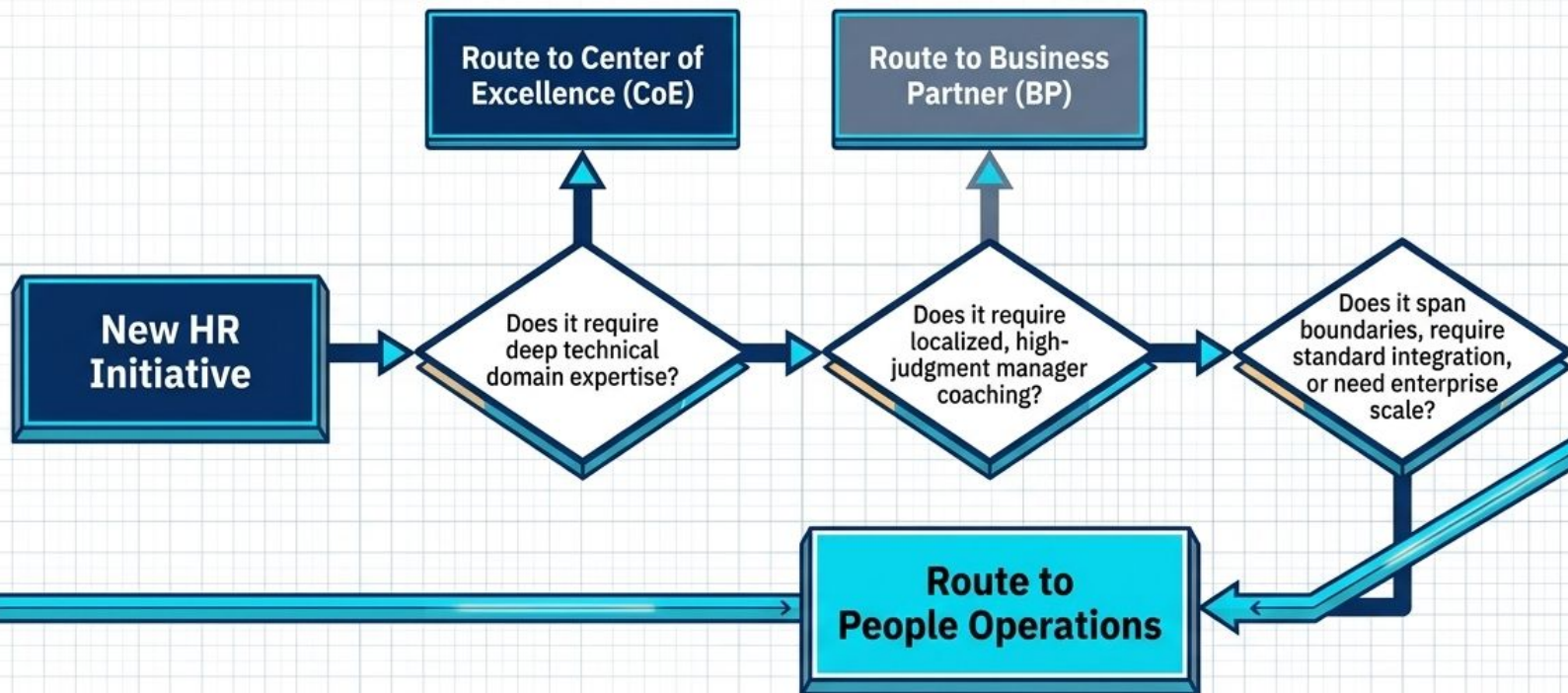
Transforming Operational Exhaust into Strategic Intelligence

Treating system performance data as a strategic asset requires advancing through the analytics maturity curve.



Governance: The Rule Engine for Preventing Regression

Without explicit governance, vertical teams reclaim interesting strategic work while People Operations inherits operational residue. Use this routing matrix for new HR initiatives.



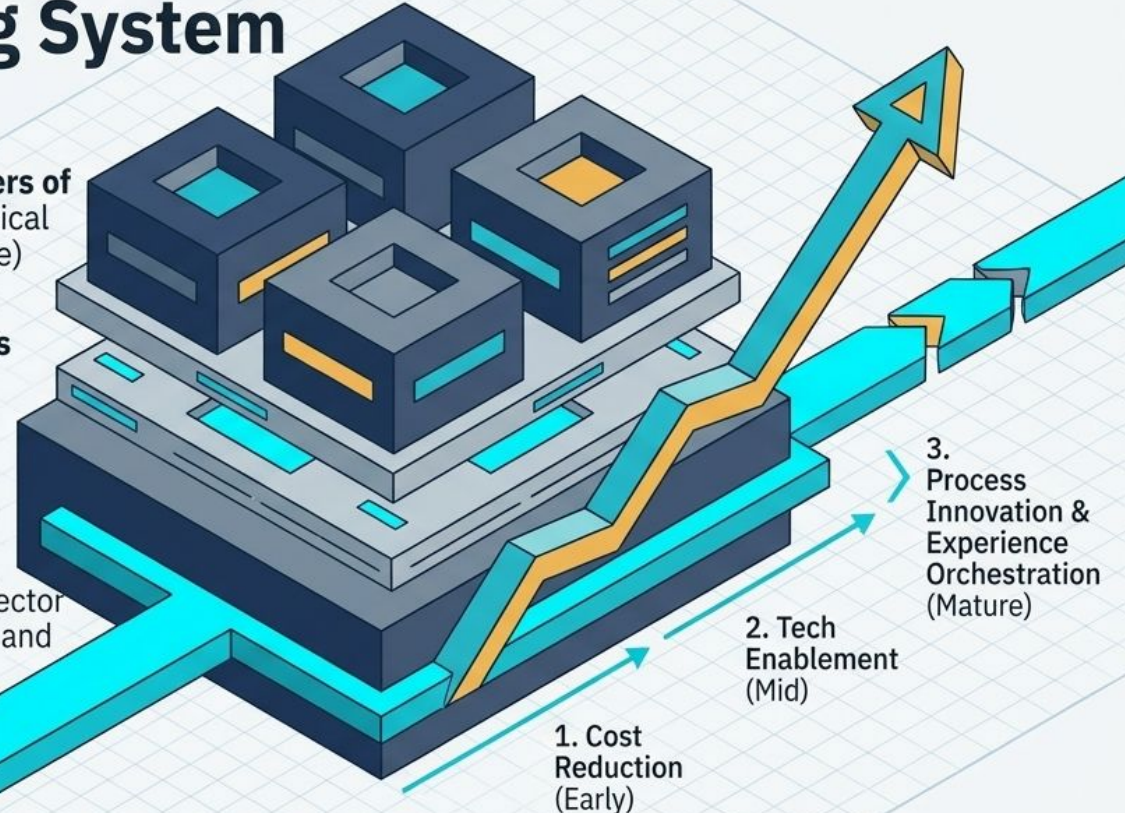
Synthesis: People Operations is the Enterprise Operating System

Vertical domain expertise (the apps) is useless without horizontal delivery mechanisms. A mature People Operations function serves as the operating system connecting data flows, standardizing interfaces, and orchestrating the user experience.

The Apps: Centers of Excellence (Vertical Domain Expertise)

The UI: Business Partners (Direct Business Interface)

The OS: People Operations (Horizontal Connector of Data, Process, and Tech)



The Blueprint for Authentic Structural Design



[1] Establish Mandate Clarity: Define explicit ownership of horizontal integration across processes, tech, and data.

[2] Position as Peer Infrastructure: Elevate to the same reporting level as CoEs and BPs to prevent scope compression.

[3] Consolidate Tech Architecture: Grant authority over HR tool selection, data governance, and platform lifecycle management.

[4] Invest in Multidisciplinary Capability: Hire for systems thinking, process design, and data science, not just transaction execution.

[5] Enforce Governance Mechanisms: Implement rigorous work-placement criteria to prevent regression to vertical silos.

The operating model delivers exactly what it was designed to deliver, regardless of the language used to describe it.