

Unlock Value by Closing the Organizational Ownership Gap

By **Alexander Asplund**, Founder & CEO of Accance Business Advisory

Key Message: Only 27% of portfolio company CEOs report top-tier organizational ownership—a gap that directly impacts the ability to translate strategic ambition into operational reality. Our study of 352 CEOs, the largest best-practice research of its kind, confirms that organizational ownership remains a persistent challenge. While leadership teams typically embrace the business plan, the broader organization often lacks the involvement, understanding, and motivation needed to drive execution. This leaves nearly three out of four PE-backed companies with significant room to strengthen organizational buy-in and implementation capacity.

Organizational Ownership Explains Execution Success: Value creation success depends on mobilizing the entire portfolio company organization, not just on strategy and leadership. Success requires employees at all levels to understand, embrace, and actively contribute to the business plan. When organizational ownership falls short, even the best strategies fail to deliver results. In fact, the combination of the “Right People in the Right Place” parameter and Organizational Ownership explains 50% of the overall value creation success. This article focuses on this critical theme, where ownership is the psychological will and commitment, and implementation capability is the operational way.

THE PATH FROM 46% TO 94% SUCCESS RATE

Data from our 352 CEO interviews shows that most portfolio companies (74%) achieve a surprisingly low 46% average success rate in realizing their value creation ambitions. Yet companies with consistently strong performance on five foundational ROI drivers achieve 77–94% average success rates. This gap represents substantial lost ROI and capital at risk. The five success themes are: collaboration with owner representatives, CEO leadership, ambitious and focused value creation plans, the right people in the right roles, and organizational ownership and implementation capabilities. (The full research is detailed in *The Private Equity CEO Playbook*.)

Need for Better Involvement and Clear Communication: CEOs don’t mince words about where improvement is needed. Their critique clusters around four themes: insufficient involvement, inadequate communication, unclear accountability, and delayed personnel decisions. On involvement, one CEO put it simply: “The more you engage the organization in the creation of the plan, the more committed and engaged organization you get.” On communication, another was direct: “You can never communicate too much—communication is always rated lowest in employee surveys.” On accountability, a leader noted: “Every initiative must have a clear owner; without that, nothing gets done.” Regarding personnel, another observed: “I waited too long to replace underperformers—that’s the classic mistake.”

Six Key Drivers for Organizational Ownership: According to portfolio company CEOs, six factors emerge as primary drivers of organizational ownership and implementation capability: involvement and participation, communication and transparency, clear accountability and delegation, follow-up and performance tracking, incentive programs, and having the right people in the right roles. The first four prove most critical, cited by 19–46% of CEOs among their top-two positive factors for successful organizational mobilization. These CEO voices point to a larger challenge—and an opportunity. When organizational ownership works, it isn’t accidental; it results from deliberate choices that cascade from strategy to action through every level of the organization. The summary below highlights the most notable score for each driver—whether that is the top-two positive factor or the top-two improvement need.

SIX KEY DRIVERS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL OWNERSHIP

1 
INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

2 
COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

3 
CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY AND DELEGATION

4 
FOLLOW-UP AND PERFORMANCE TRACKING

5 
INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

6 
RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT ROLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our research with 352 portfolio company CEOs reveals that organizational ownership is both a critical success factor and a persistent challenge. Only 27% of CEOs give top marks for organizational ownership and six drivers emerge as central, highlighting the most notable score for each driver: involvement and participation (46% cite as top-two positive factor), communication and transparency (49% cite as top-two improvement need), clear accountability and delegation (26% cite as top-two positive factor), follow-up and performance tracking (19% cite as top-two positive factor), incentive programs (11% cite as top-two positive factor—equally rated as an improvement need), and having the right people in right roles (18% cite as top-two improvement need).

METHODOLOGY

This study draws on structured in-depth interviews with 352 portfolio company CEOs across Nordic markets. CEOs were asked to identify the “top-two” ways they successfully mobilized organizational ownership for the business plan (top-two positive factors) and the “top-two” improvement needs on this theme (top-two improvement needs). All percentages reflect unique CEO responses to these specific questions. The full research and methodology are presented in *The Private Equity CEO Playbook*.

A Solvable Performance Gap: The substantial value leakage between 46% and 94% value creation success rates is not explained by opaque or complex factors. The 46% success rate seen across 74% of our studied portfolio companies is surprising; however, the formula for achieving 94% is straightforward: consistently mastering the fundamentals and diligently avoiding common pitfalls. While the logic is apparent, actually executing it remains the defining hurdle for many. The message from CEOs is unambiguous: there is no reason for serial owners and seasoned management teams to frequently underperform. Investors, boards, and management teams committed to closing this performance gap should pay close attention to the collective voice of portfolio company CEOs on “what works” and “what’s missing”—and systematically apply their proven best practices.

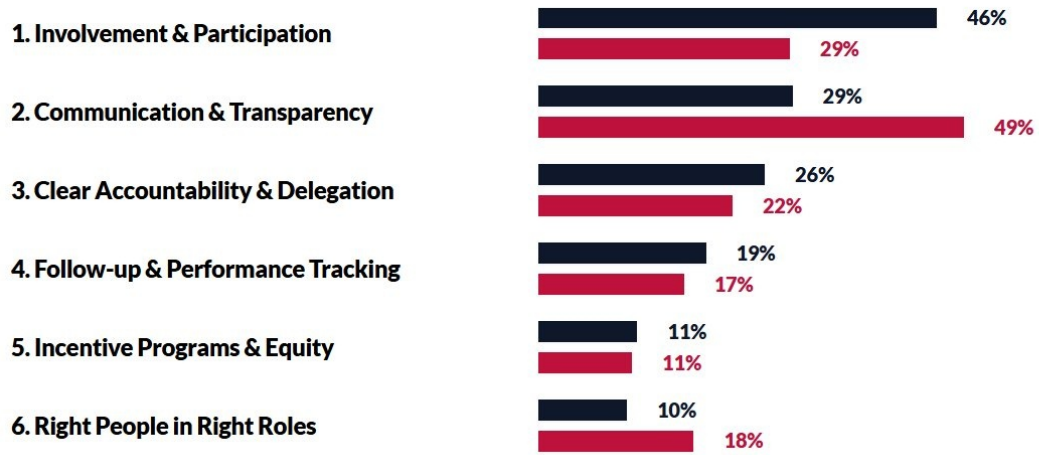
Quantified Cause-and-Effect—A Repeatable Formula: The experiences of 352 CEOs distill the systematic behaviors that drive success. The root-causes of underperformance are systematic, and the gaps can be closed by actionable behavioral shifts. Our data reveals a repeatable formula: quantifiable cause-and-effect relationships across the five foundational dimensions that map the path from average to 77-94% success rates.

Capturing the Potential: Translating these findings into practice requires structured intervention. The Accance team—leveraging experience from 50+ portfolio companies and leading 120+ commercial due diligence studies—integrates these research-backed best practices into our value creation work. A practical starting point is our diagnostic tool, which assesses performance against these foundational themes and converts root-cause findings into actionable, gap-closing initiatives.

Study Overview: The full study is documented in *The Private Equity CEO Playbook* (www.privateequityceoplaybook.com). The series includes two introductory papers, *Closing the Value Leakage Gap* and *352 CEOs’ Best Advice & Main Regrets*, followed by eight “*Unlocking Value*” articles that drill down into the specific gaps within the foundational dimensions: *Alignment, Expertise, Governance, Value Creation Planning, People, Ownership, Momentum, and Implementation*.

The Organizational Ownership Challenge

■ TOP 2 CONTRIBUTION % ■ TOP 2 GAPS %



1. Involvement and Participation in Plan Development

The first—and most critical—driver is involvement: engaging the organization in developing and owning the business plan from the outset. When employees contribute to strategy formation, they don't merely understand the plan—they internalize it. This psychological ownership transforms passive compliance into active commitment.

Involvement and participation dominated: 46% ranked it among their top-two positive factors, while 29% placed insufficient involvement among their top-two improvement needs. The pattern is clear: when people help create the plan, they own its execution; when they don't, engagement suffers.

A seasoned CEO observed, "The more you engage the organization in the creation of the plan, the more committed and engaged organization you get." But others experienced the opposite: "Many in the organization felt everything was top-down, which destroyed engagement."

1.1. Broad Participation in Strategy Development

What works: Broad participation in developing the business plan ranked as the single most important factor—46% placed this among their top-two positive factors. When employees at multiple levels contribute to strategy formation, they internalize the objectives. As one executive shared, "We involved all white-collar employees in developing the plan. Asking functional managers to create their own must-win battles connected to top management's priorities creates ownership." Another leader noted, "If those plans are the organization's own plan, then the motivation is usually there. Being part of the creation is very important for ownership."

The most effective approaches begin early and extend broadly. One CEO described "doing a bottom-up process where we had workshops with everyone in the organization, then matched these against top-down objectives." Another emphasized the power of early engagement: "The management team was involved in the development from the very beginning—that automatically creates ownership." Some leaders anchored participation in the daily operations of each level: "We let the regions and functions develop their own business plans, then consolidated into group material. When the plans come from below, people own them—they have no excuses, because these became their goals."

One CEO captured the principle with particular clarity: "You cannot expect people to run after a goal if they do not understand it and do not share the ambition. You have to win their hearts and minds—either develop it together with them or pitch it in a way they can embrace."

What's missing: However, 29% identified insufficient involvement as a top-two improvement need. CEOs recognized that top-down mandates create resistance: "Many felt everything was top-down and it destroyed engagement." The solution:

“We should have let more key people be involved and participate in developing the business plan.” Others noted the cost of rushing: “If we had taken more time and worked it out together, we would have arrived at something better.” One leader reflected, “I could have involved more people on a deeper level and communicated more transparently with the whole organization.”

Another CEO pointed to the organizational challenge: “The business plan was only the management’s product. I should have gone to the different regions afterward to explain it and get their input.” The prescription: invest time in anchoring—it is never wasted.

KEY FINDING: Involvement and participation is both the highest-rated success factor and a significant gap area. The difference between high-performing and struggling organizations often comes down to whether employees helped shape the plan or merely received it.

2. Communication and Transparency

Does information flow freely throughout the organization? This question defines whether strategy translates into action. The numbers reveal stark tension: 29% ranked communication as a top-two positive factor, while 49% identified inadequate communication as a top-two improvement need—making communication the sharpest area of dissatisfaction by a significant margin.

Here lies the central challenge. CEOs universally acknowledge communication's importance, yet consistently underinvest in it. "No matter how much you communicate, it's never enough," one leader admitted. "You can never be too clear or repeat the message too often." Another reflected on the gap: "In every employee survey, communication gets the lowest scores. We always think we've communicated enough, but we haven't." This pattern represents portfolio companies' greatest untapped opportunity for mobilizing organizational ownership. Communication isn't a one-time event—it's a continuous discipline that requires intentional investment of leadership time and energy.

2.1. Repetition and Clarity

What works: For 24% of CEOs, consistent and repeated communication ranked among their top-two positive factors for building ownership. Repetition transforms information into understanding. "Communication is by far the most important," one CEO emphasized. "This means investing a lot of time in repetition. We have quarterly all-hands meetings where we go through key objectives, progress, and what needs to be done." Another observed: "Establishing a shared picture of the distant goal—then communicating it relentlessly, clearly, and consistently—is absolutely critical."

The most effective communicators simplify ruthlessly. "We made a very simple strategy on one slide," one CEO recalled. "It made it easy for the organization to understand what we're aiming for, when we're succeeding, and when we're not." Another described the power of translation: "You have to explain it differently to the board than to a forklift driver—adapt the communication to each audience." Visualization reinforces the message: "Put it on walls, roll it on TV screens, make it part of daily life."

One CEO captured the discipline required: "Repetition. Explaining again and again. First present the target picture and plan at more than one occasion, and then as soon as possible connect actions and plans to it." Another reflected: "Three core messages—I repeated them relentlessly until they were implemented. You can never have too much repetition."

What's missing: However, 43% identified repetition and clarity deficits as their top-two improvement need—the single largest gap across all drivers. The critique was consistent: "We could have spent more time communicating," admitted one CEO.

“That would have required additional investment in time—but it would have been worth it.” Others recognized structural issues: “The message gets through to management but loses fidelity as it cascades down. The CEO talks about a target many times, but employees may only hear it once.”

One CEO offered a sobering reflection: “You think you’re being clear, but you’re not. It’s the recipients who determine whether the message got through—and it’s often interpreted differently by everyone.” Another identified the structural challenge: “Middle managers are the key players for cascading ownership through the organization—invest in getting excellent ones.” The solution: “More repetition, more channels, more presence throughout the organization.”

2.2. Transparency About Progress and Challenges

What works: Transparency about business performance ranked as a top-two positive factor for 9% of CEOs. When employees understand both successes and struggles, they engage more deeply. “Being transparent and physically communicative—continuously sharing what we’re trying to achieve, not just with leadership but with a broad base in the organization—that’s what builds ownership,” one CEO explained. Another emphasized the importance of honest progress updates: “Every Monday, everyone in leadership talks about what’s important for the week. Every Friday, I do short employee visits—this creates strong engagement.”

One leader distilled it plainly: “Clarity is the most important thing. Create transparency, share information with those who are involved. Set everyone in the organization at the right level regarding information.”

What’s missing: However, 11% cited insufficient transparency as a concern. “We should have been more open about the company’s challenges and progress,” one CEO reflected. “Without regular updates, people fill the void with assumptions—usually negative ones.” Another noted: “Information exchange must always be worked on. You always feel you get too little information. This is what builds trust.” One CEO challenged others: “Don’t just tell the organization what’s happened—ask them questions to understand how they’ve perceived it. Communication is not just broadcasting.” The prescription: create systematic updates that reach all levels of the organization.

KEY FINDING: Communication shows the largest gap between what CEOs deliver and what organizations need, making this the greatest opportunity for improving organizational ownership.

3. Clear Accountability and Delegation

Ownership requires clarity: who owns what, and what does success look like? Accountability and delegation ranked as a top-two positive factor for 26%, while 22% cited the need for clearer responsibility assignment as a top-two improvement need. The message: people can't own what they don't clearly possess.

3.1. Breaking Down Goals to Individual Level

What works: For 7% of CEOs, breaking down high-level objectives into individual contributions ranked as a top-two positive factor. Abstraction kills ownership; specificity creates it. "The most important thing is to break down the comprehensive business plan into measurable goals," one CEO explained. "Each person needs to understand: how can I as an individual contribute?" Another emphasized translation: "Communicating this in a way that becomes relevant for all employees, even if you're at another level where you don't have a direct relation to the overall goal—that's the key."

One leader described the rigor required: "Establish a shared picture of the distant goal. Then communicate it relentlessly, clearly, and consistently—and translate it so that in your daily work, you know what you're doing to help us get there."

What's missing: However, 13% cited the need for better goal breakdown as a top-two improvement need. "The business plan was too generalized and abstract," one CEO admitted. "Saying 'revenue should triple in three years' means nothing to individuals lower in the organization." Another observed: "We needed to translate strategic goals into something people could see and feel in their daily work. The further down you go, the more abstract it feels—unless you make the connection explicit." The prescription: "Invest time breaking down objectives so each person understands their piece of the puzzle."

3.2. Clear Assignment of Initiative Ownership

What works: Clear assignment of responsibility emerged as a top-two positive factor for 16% of CEOs. When every initiative has an identified owner, accountability becomes automatic. "Assigning responsibility to people—that's fundamental," one CEO stated. "You need to divide responsibility for different areas to different people. It must be very clear who is responsible for what." Another emphasized the self-reinforcing nature of ownership: "When managers for different areas feel strong responsibility for their tasks, they drive results without needing constant oversight."

The best organizations push responsibility deep into the structure. "We pushed financial responsibility far down in the organization," one CEO recalled. "Even department heads were responsible for their P&L. That creates real ownership." Another described successful delegation: "Each company has its own managing director responsible for their P&L—there's a very clear mandate. We're a toolbox, not a taskmaster." A third CEO captured the principle: "The CEO should never own the initiatives personally—someone else should own them, and the CEO's primary job is to follow up."

What's missing: However, 9% identified unclear accountability as a top-two improvement need. "It needs to be clearer who is leading and responsible for every target so every person knows who to turn to with questions," one CEO noted. Others struggled with overlapping responsibilities: "We should have been much clearer about who owns which ball in the organization—when it's unclear, nobody takes full ownership." One leader identified a more specific failure: "Ownership was very concentrated in the management team. It would have helped if other managers and employees had taken greater ownership." The solution: ensure every initiative has one clear owner, with explicit success metrics.

3.3. Empowerment Within Clear Boundaries

What works: For 9% of CEOs, providing genuine empowerment with clear boundaries ranked as a top-two positive factor. Delegation without authority is hollow; authority without boundaries is chaos. "I've been given freedom to manage my assignment," one CEO explained. "They handed over clear responsibility and let me work in peace." Another emphasized the balance: "I'm very clear about setting frames within which we operate, and within those frames, I give a lot of freedom about how things get done."

One leader described the cascade effect: "Give out responsibility—both financial and practical—and then encourage those leaders to delegate further. Ownership must cascade through the organization." Another reflected: "Decentralization, where everyone gets to participate and take responsibility. Delegation, where everyone receives the trust to execute."

What's missing: However, 5% cited the need for better empowerment as a top-two improvement need. The critique often centered on insufficient trust: "We could have delegated more responsibility—not just tasks, but actual decision-making authority." Others noted the corrosive effect of micromanagement: "When leadership constantly second-guesses decisions, people stop taking ownership. They wait for instructions instead of acting."

KEY FINDING: The most effective organizations push accountability deep into the structure—P&L responsibility at department level, clear initiative ownership, and genuine empowerment within defined boundaries. Ownership without authority is hollow; authority without clarity is chaos.

4. Follow-up and Performance Tracking

Plans without tracking become wishes. Regular follow-up ranked as a top-two positive factor for 19%, while 17% cited inadequate tracking as a top-two improvement need. How organizations monitor progress determines whether initiatives succeed or quietly fade. The discipline of tracking creates a culture of accountability—when everyone knows that results will be reviewed, behavior changes. Yet many organizations establish tracking systems only to let them atrophy within months.

What works: Consistent follow-up structures emerged as a critical success factor. “We have monthly deep dives where we discuss different initiatives in the leadership team and make necessary adjustments,” one CEO explained. “Without this rhythm, initiatives lose momentum.” Another emphasized the power of visibility: “We implemented a KPI structure for measuring and following up on progress. When people see their numbers, they own their numbers.” The most effective tracking is frequent but focused: “Regular status follow-ups—not just at month-end, but weekly or biweekly—create a culture where delivering on commitments matters.”

Follow-up also signals organizational priorities. “The business plan must be a living document,” one CEO emphasized. “If you only review it annually, people forget it exists. We reference it in every meeting—that keeps it alive.” Another captured the self-reinforcing nature of tracking: “Direct follow-up on individuals creates the feeling that someone cares about the goals.” One leader offered a practical insight: “In many companies, the business plan disappears after it’s created. The business plan must be a living document if the organization is to stay engaged with the goals and initiatives.”

What’s missing: However, 17% identified tracking deficits as a concern. “We should have had clearer milestones and a specific timeframe,” one CEO admitted. “Without that structure, the organization didn’t have clear sub-goals to work toward.” Others noted follow-up fatigue: “After initial enthusiasm, we lost focus. The organization needs consistent reminders that the plan matters—not just during quarterly reviews, but continuously.” One CEO was blunt: “We were poor at employee surveys. You should do them every six months and then follow up. Without these surveys, it’s hard to know how the organization perceives the goals.” The solution: “Institute monthly or even weekly check-ins, and make tracking visible across the organization.”

KEY FINDING: The “living document” principle emerged as a recurring best practice—treating the business plan not as an annual exercise but as a constant reference point. Organizations that review progress monthly or weekly sustain momentum; those that track quarterly lose it.

5. Incentive Programs

Financial alignment creates “shared destiny” throughout the organization. Incentive programs ranked as a top-two positive factor for 11%, while the top-two improvement need score is equally high at 11%. This balanced score suggests that while PE firms have mastered the mechanics of incentive design for leadership, extending participation more broadly remains an untapped opportunity.

What works: The critical mechanism is broad equity participation. “The PE ownership model—with so many people involved in the incentives—created enormous drive,” one CEO noted. “When people had been through exit processes before, they knew that if it goes well, they could become millionaires.” Another described the alignment effect: “Top management including myself had shared ownership with the PE firm. This created a strong incentive to align ourselves. We became equal business partners.”

The depth of participation matters. “Top 50–70 people are shareholders,” one CEO explained. “Creating buy-in among the biggest key people—that’s how you get real commitment.” Another emphasized extending incentives beyond leadership: “Better financial incentives for staff that create alignment between owner and employee goals. When everyone’s in the same boat, everyone rows in the same direction.” One CEO captured the simplicity of the model: “We have a very strong incentive program, which means all key people today are invested in the business. Such a simple model and so powerful.”

What’s missing: At 11%, incentive structures represent a meaningful top-two improvement need. One CEO identified a common blind spot: “PE firms often underestimate the need to explain the potential. It gets 45 minutes in some meeting, but people need much more to truly understand what they own and what it could be worth. In the first PE journey, management doesn’t grasp how much money they could earn. By the second journey, they’ve built their own Excel models to benchmark what their investment is worth.” Another reflected: “We could have extended the long-term incentive program lower in the organization. The further down you go, the harder it is to make people understand what we’re doing and why.”

KEY FINDING: Incentive programs function as a powerful mechanism for alignment when implemented. The opportunity lies not only in redesigning incentives but in extending them more broadly and communicating their potential more effectively—particularly to those experiencing their first PE journey.

6. Right People in Right Roles

Organizational ownership ultimately depends on capable, committed people. Having the right team ranked as a top-two positive factor for 10%, but 18% cited personnel issues as a top-two improvement need. The message: leaders consistently wait too long to address people problems. This hesitation is understandable—replacing people is difficult, expensive, and emotionally draining. But the cost of delay is higher. Every month a misaligned leader remains in place, their resistance spreads through their organization, poisoning engagement and undermining the business plan.

The pattern emerged clearly in CEO reflections: leaders recognize the importance of personnel decisions in hindsight but struggle to act decisively in the moment. “I made the classic mistake,” admitted one CEO. “I waited too long to replace managers who didn’t believe in the business plan.” The lesson: personnel decisions delayed are organizational ownership denied.

What works: When present, the right people create multiplication effects. “The absolutely most important thing is getting the right person in the right place,” one CEO emphasized. “Different people have different experiences and qualities, and a good CEO uses this optimally.” Another described the foundation this creates: “Get the right team on place first. Then create the right culture—define what’s important for us and how we think. Without that foundation, no strategy succeeds.”

Building the right team requires both selection and development. “We changed the leadership team capacity-wise and competence-wise,” one CEO recalled. “The company had very strong functional competence but limited experience driving strategic initiatives. We brought in new people for the right mix.” Another emphasized the multiplier effect: “Middle managers are key players for cascading ownership through the organization—invest in getting excellent ones.” One leader captured the cultural dimension: “Having a mission-driven culture where everyone believed in what we were doing—that was our strongest asset.”

What’s missing: The critique was remarkably consistent: leaders wait too long. “I should have replaced people faster,” one CEO reflected. “When you try to change an organization, there will naturally be resistance. Some people simply don’t want to be on the journey—and keeping them undermines everyone else’s commitment.” Another was more direct: “I waited too long to replace underperforming managers. You hold people by the shoulders even when they haven’t delivered, because they’re good people. But that’s a mistake—it signals that performance doesn’t matter.”

One CEO offered a structural insight: “I see large differences between countries where I’ve had good leadership in place for a long time versus where I haven’t. If you have good leadership in place, you can drive issues forward much faster.” Another was blunt: “If I had replaced people earlier, I would have succeeded

significantly better. There were far too many who were comfortable and didn't want to make the efforts required to achieve the new goals." The prescription: "Act decisively on personnel; the organization watches what you tolerate."

KEY FINDING: Right people emerges as a critical gap area—not because it's unimportant, but because leaders consistently delay necessary personnel decisions. The pattern: recognize importance in hindsight, struggle to act in real-time. Organizations watch what leaders tolerate.

Closing the Organizational Ownership Gap: A Leadership Checklist

The data reveals where the gap is widest—but also where the opportunity is greatest. Only 27% of CEOs give top marks for organizational ownership and implementation, yet as our research shows, organizational ownership is one of five central themes that together differentiate the 94% success rate companies from those achieving only 46%.

We have identified six key drivers of organizational ownership based on the interviews with 352 portfolio company CEOs. Here is a summary leadership checklist across all six drivers for unlocking value by closing the organizational ownership gap.

1. Drive Involvement and Participation

- **Involve broadly in strategy development:** Engage multiple levels in creating the business plan—when people help shape the plan, they own its execution.
- **Break goals down to individual level:** Translate high-level objectives into specific contributions so each person understands their role in the larger picture.
- **Create bottom-up input channels:** Establish workshops, forums, and feedback mechanisms that let employees contribute ideas and concerns.

2. Communicate Relentlessly

- **Repeat the message constantly:** Invest in repetition—quarterly all-hands meetings, weekly updates, daily visibility. As one CEO said: “You can never communicate too much.”
- **Simplify ruthlessly:** Distill strategy to one page. If you can’t explain it simply, people can’t own it completely.
- **Be transparent about progress and challenges:** Share both wins and struggles openly—trust comes from honesty, not from managing perceptions.

3. Establish Clear Accountability

- **Assign single owners to every initiative:** Ensure each project has one clear responsible party with defined success metrics.
- **Push responsibility deep:** Move P&L accountability and decision authority to the lowest appropriate level—real ownership requires real authority.
- **Empower within boundaries:** Set clear frames, then grant freedom within them. The best leaders function as “toolbox, not taskmaster.”

4. Institute Rigorous Follow-up

- **Make the plan a living document:** Reference it in every meeting, not just annual reviews. What’s discussed weekly matters; what’s reviewed annually fades.

- **Track visibly:** Create KPI dashboards visible across the organization. When people see progress, they sustain momentum.
- **Act on underperformance:** Don't wait to address personnel or execution issues—the organization watches what you tolerate.

5. Align Incentives Broadly

- **Extend equity participation deep:** Move beyond leadership—when the top 50-70 people are shareholders, commitment multiplies across the organization.
- **Invest time explaining the potential:** Don't let the incentive program get 45 minutes in a meeting—people need to truly understand what they own and what it could be worth.
- **Create shared destiny:** Financial alignment between owners and employees turns employees into business partners who row in the same direction.

6. Get the Right People in the Right Roles

- **Act decisively on personnel:** Don't wait to replace managers who don't believe in the business plan—every month of delay spreads resistance through the organization.
- **Build the leadership team deliberately:** Assess whether you have the right mix of competence and ambition—strong functional skills alone are not enough for transformation.
- **Invest in middle management:** Middle managers are the key players for cascading ownership through the organization—invest in getting excellent ones.

Reaching the 94% success rate requires excelling across all five central success themes—collaboration with owner representatives, CEO leadership, ambitious value creation plans, right people in right roles, and organizational ownership and implementation capabilities. Organizational ownership comes last in the sequence—not because it's least important, but because it depends on the others. When strategy is clear, leadership is strong, plans are ambitious, and the right people are in place, organizational ownership becomes achievable. When any of these foundations crack, no amount of communication or involvement compensates.

The path from 46% to 94% success rate runs through engaged, empowered organizations—but engagement and empowerment must be built on solid strategic and leadership foundations. The most successful PE-backed companies treat organizational ownership not as a communication exercise but as a comprehensive operating discipline that touches every aspect of how the company functions.

About the Author

Alexander Asplund is the founder and CEO of Accance Business Advisory. He brings 30 years of experience in strategic and operational consulting, specializing in accelerating value creation in private equity since 2003. To date, Alexander has supported 50+ portfolio companies with growth, margin improvement, and transformation initiatives, and has led 120+ commercial due diligence engagements for 25+ private equity investors. His specialty is developing and accelerating full-potential value creation programs and securing strong alignment across owner representatives, management, and the organization to achieve ambitious business transformation and value creation objectives.

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Appendix: Summary of CEO Response Data

Percentages reflect unique CEO responses to “top-two positive factors contributing to organizational ownership” and “top-two improvement needs.”

| Theme | Subtheme | Top-Two Factors | Top-Two Gaps |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Involvement & Participation | (Combined) | 46% | 29% |
| | 1.1 Broad Participation | 46% | 29% |
| 2. Communication & Transparency | (Combined) | 29% | 49% |
| | 2.1 Repetition/Clarity | 24% | 43% |
| | 2.2 Progress Transparency | 9% | 11% |
| 3. Clear Accountability & Delegation | (Combined) | 26% | 22% |
| | 3.1 Goal Breakdown | 7% | 13% |
| | 3.2 Initiative Ownership | 16% | 9% |
| | 3.3 Empowerment | 9% | 5% |
| 4. Follow-up & Performance Tracking | (No subthemes) | 19% | 17% |
| 5. Incentive Programs | (No subthemes) | 11% | 11% |
| 6. Right People in Right Roles | (No subthemes) | 10% | 18% |

Note: Percentages reflect share of 352 CEOs who ranked each factor among their top-two responses. Combined theme percentages represent unique CEO mentions across subthemes.