

A COMPLIMENTARY RESOURCE

When Your Organization's Risk Lives Outside Your Own Walls

What outsourcing, partnering, and platforming actually do to your continuity risk, and how to design well when your organization is still finding its shape

Neal McIntyre Consulting

Your Risk Does Not Stay Inside Your Walls

Most conversations about organizational risk focus on what happens inside your own four walls: who holds authority, who understands the work, who would step up if a leader left.

But many organizations have quietly extended their real boundary well beyond their own walls, outsourcing a function, entering a partnership, or building critical operations on someone else's platform. Each of those choices can be the right strategic decision. Each one also does something important to your continuity risk that is easy to miss.

Extending your boundary beyond yourself does not eliminate risk. It relocates it, often to a place where you have far less visibility and far less authority to act.

If You Outsource a Function

You handed a specific piece of work, payroll, information technology, customer service, to an outside provider under a contract.

What's easy to miss: The knowledge of how that function actually works often leaves with it. If the relationship ends, you may discover you kept the contract but lost the ability to bring the work back in-house quickly.

Ask yourself: If this provider disappeared with ninety days notice, could we resume this ourselves, or would we be starting from zero?

If You've Entered a Partnership

You combined capabilities with another organization to pursue something neither of you could do as well alone.

What's easy to miss: Your continuity now depends not just on your own leadership, but on your partner's leadership too, and on the health of the relationship between you. A leadership change on their side can quietly become a risk on yours.

Ask yourself: Do we have any real visibility into our partner's own succession planning?

If You're Built on Someone Else's Platform

A critical part of your operation runs on top of someone else's technology, infrastructure, or distribution channel.

What's easy to miss: This risk is not tied to any person at all. It is tied to another company's business decisions, pricing changes, or policy shifts, none of which you have any real authority over.

Ask yourself: If this platform changed its terms with thirty days notice, what would break, and how long would it take to rebuild elsewhere?

A Simple Discipline for All Three

None of these choices are unwise on their own. The mistake is making the choice once and never looking at it again.

- Name explicitly what would need to happen if each of these relationships ended without warning.
- Put one specific person in charge of maintaining enough internal understanding to manage that transition if it becomes necessary.
- Revisit each relationship on a fixed schedule. The risk in a five-year-old partnership is rarely the same as it was in year one.

If Your Organization Is Still Finding Its Shape

Not every organization fits neatly into a pattern yet, especially very young ones. That is not a problem to fix immediately. Forcing structure onto an organization before it is ready can do real damage.

But there is a difference between deliberately letting structure emerge and simply avoiding the hard decisions indefinitely.

If You're Choosing to Let Structure Emerge

- Set a real time horizon for how long you intend to operate without settled structure, and actually revisit it.
- Even without a settled structure, name who makes financial decisions above a certain size, and keep a basic record of who is responsible for what.
- Watch closely for competing informal power centers taking root. Undecided structure is fertile ground for exactly that.
- When your structure does start to settle, name it out loud. Do not just discover it in hindsight, long after it happened.

An organization still finding its shape is not the same as an organization with no shape at all. The difference is whether anyone is watching closely enough to notice the shape the moment it appears.

Where This Leads

If any part of your organization's risk currently lives outside your own walls, in a contract, a partnership, or a platform you do not control, that is worth a closer look before it becomes a surprise.

If that sounds like your organization, that is exactly the conversation I have with CEOs and boards every week.

Neal McIntyre | Dynasty Architect | Helping CEOs turn hard-to-run organizations into dynasties sustained by systems, standards, and continuity.

nealmcintyreconsulting.com