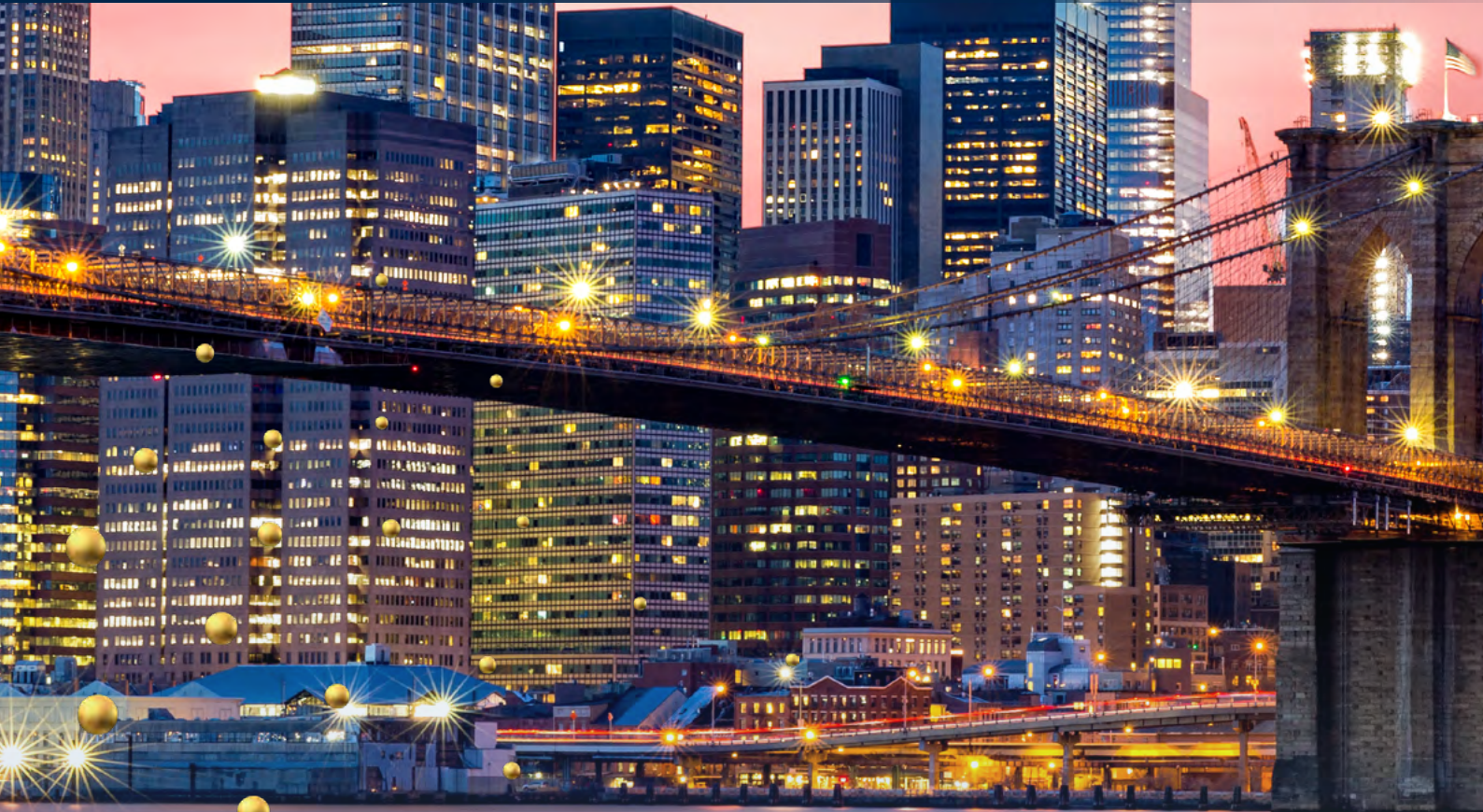


# FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO EXECUTION DISCIPLINE

How Leading Insurers Are Converting Insurtech  
Partnerships into Measurable Returns

Based on 20 interviews with senior insurance transformation leaders

March 2026



# Contents

Executive Summary	p3
I. The Imperative: Turning Executive Pressure into Execution Momentum	p9
II. Why Most Traditional Carriers Stumble on Execution	p12
III. The Six-Stage Lifecycle	p18
IV. The 100-Day Readiness Plan	p33
V. What Insurtech Leaders Can Do	p37
Appendices	p39
Call to Action	p41
Contacts	p42





# Executive Summary

**“The execution challenge in insurance lies in connecting fragmented ecosystems. Leaders who act as ‘Human APIs’—bridging functions, aligning stakeholders, and maintaining momentum—are the ones who turn transformation into results.”**

**Global Insurance Carrier, Innovation Leader**

## Executive Summary

The insurance industry faces a multi-billion-dollar execution problem

North American insurers alone will spend an estimated \$10.5 billion on core IT modernization between 2024 and 2026. Research shows 70% of transformation projects fail to meet their goals, and around half of all digital initiatives fail to meet or exceed their business outcome targets. These are not abstract risks: a European insurer wrote off more than \$500 million after an eight-year long transformation effort failed, while another insurer completed its claims platforming program 500% over budget.

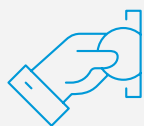
The compounding cost of execution failure is severe

Execution barriers can add an estimated three to six months of delay per initiative. For a carrier running four to eight concurrent transformation programs, a six-month delay on just three initiatives—each expected to generate \$10 million in annual run-rate benefits—implies at least \$15 million in unrealized value, before accounting for the broader strategic opportunity cost.



**~4,000**

Insurtechs Globally (est.)



**\$60B+**

Cumulative Insurtech Funding



**\$15B+**

AI-Focused Insurtech Investment

*Sources: Gallagher Insurtech Global Outlook Q4 2025; A&M Research and estimations supplemented by selected third-party research including Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Company, Gartner and Genasys. Please contact A&M directly for further details on our methodology or the specific sources used.*

## The Thesis: Execution Discipline Is the Differentiator

Insurers that partner with insurtech startups can access frontier capabilities and accelerate transformation timelines. But startups operate under different conditions than traditional vendors—less mature governance, faster iteration cycles, and lower tolerance for prolonged decision-making. The insurers that win will be those that build the internal execution discipline to capture these advantages without sacrificing control.

Technology is no longer the primary constraint. Execution is. **Around 4,000 insurtechs operate globally, backed by more than \$60 billion in cumulative funding**, with a growing share focused on AI-driven capabilities. For insurers seeking to accelerate transformation, **the insurtech startup ecosystem represents a powerful source of speed and innovation**: startups operate at the frontier of new technologies, iterate rapidly, and are structurally designed to bring ideas from prototype to deployment faster than traditional enterprise vendors. As Harvard Business Review research notes, innovation increasingly depends on partnerships because no single organization has all the capabilities required to move ideas to scale.

**Meanwhile, working with insurtech startups also introduces a different execution reality.** Unlike established vendors, startups typically lack mature governance structures, extensive implementation resources, or the ability to absorb prolonged decision cycles inside large enterprises. **As a result, insurers must rethink how they manage execution risk while engaging with the insurtech startup ecosystem—accelerating innovation without sacrificing discipline. The framework presented in this report is designed precisely for this purpose: helping insurers translate the speed and innovation potential of insurtech startup partnerships into scalable, measurable business outcomes.**

## The Solution: A Disciplined Transformation Accelerator Framework for Insurtech Partnerships

By pairing what insurtechs experience from the outside with what transformation leaders describe from the inside, this research surfaces execution breakdowns that neither perspective alone would reveal. Through 20 in-depth interviews with senior insurance transformation leaders and a survey of more than 120 insurtech founders, we identified a definitive **six-stage framework** that distinguishes high-performing insurtech partnerships from the rest, along with **five execution barriers** that consistently prevent carriers from scaling.

This report provides:

- **A six-stage lifecycle framework** for executing transformative insurtech partnerships from problem validation through post-launch accountability
- **Five structural execution barriers** with estimated costs of inaction that explain why most carriers stumble
- **A 100-day readiness plan** with named accountability, specific deliverables, and success metrics for senior leadership
- **An execution maturity self-assessment** to diagnose organizational readiness across all six stages

*Sources: A&M analysis and primary research, including 20 interviews with senior insurance transformation leaders across carriers with \$1B-\$20B+ GWP, and a survey conducted by the Insurance Collaboration Index (ICI) Committee, led by Insurtech NY, with 120+ insurtech founders and 155 total responses.*





## The Six-Stage Lifecycle: From Problem to Measurable Impact



Stage	Core Activities	What Leading Organizations Do Differently
<b>1. Problem Validation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Surface and prioritize strategic problems</li> <li>■ Identify executive sponsors</li> <li>■ Secure business-unit resources</li> </ul>	Start with quantified problems, not solutions. Leading organizations define KPI targets and validate the economic value of an initiative before beginning the solution search. Initiatives without a clear “size of prize” are deprioritized early.
<b>2. Problem-Led Selection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Translate validated problems into solution criteria</li> <li>■ Assess buy, build, or partner options</li> <li>■ Identify and evaluate insurtech partners</li> </ul>	Let the problem define the partner. Selection follows predefined evaluation criteria and governance processes. Buy/build/partner decisions are made objectively, supported by continuous market scanning through trusted networks.
<b>3. Operator Empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Appoint a cross-functional execution team</li> <li>■ Embed risk, IT security, legal, and procurement stakeholders</li> <li>■ Define roles and decision rights from the outset</li> </ul>	Execution leaders are empowered early. A named operator with cross-functional credibility leads the initiative end-to-end, with authority to drive decisions and maintain stakeholder alignment. The same team remains accountable beyond the POC stage.
<b>4. Decision Engine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Run time-boxed POCs and pilots</li> <li>■ Conduct technical, operational, and risk due diligence</li> <li>■ Refine the business case based on pilot outcomes</li> </ul>	Pilots operate as decision engines, not experiments. Leading organizations cap POCs at ~60 days, define success metrics upfront, and map governance steps in advance to enable parallel execution across control functions.
<b>5. Pre-Scale Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Finalize the business case and commercial structure</li> <li>■ Establish contractual and governance frameworks for scaling</li> </ul>	Commit before scaling. Leading organizations link commercial terms to measurable outcomes, cascade performance targets internally, and separate value negotiation from legal drafting to accelerate contracting.
<b>6. Post-Launch Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Deploy solutions into core workflows</li> <li>■ Drive change management and user adoption</li> </ul>	Scaling requires sustained ownership. Execution teams maintain tight cross-functional cadence, escalate issues rapidly with C-suite visibility, and track benefit realization for months after go-live.



## 100-Day Readiness Plan for Senior Leadership

The six-stage lifecycle requires organizational readiness. Most carriers cannot start at Stage 1 and expect it to work—execution barriers quietly undermine even well-designed partnerships. This 100-day plan prepares the organization to operate the lifecycle with discipline.

Timeline	Focus Area	Objective	Key Deliverable	Owner
Wks 1–3	<b>Portfolio Hard Reality Check</b>	Expose noise before adding new initiatives. Create space for disciplined focus.	Rationalized portfolio with validated priorities	<b>COO / CTO</b>
Wks 3–5	<b>IT Capacity &amp; Pipeline Transparency</b>	Separate strategic execution from operational firefighting.	Demand vs. capacity map with strategic-to-reactive split	<b>CIO / CTO</b>
Wks 5–8	<b>Decision Rights &amp; Ownership Reset</b>	Clarify who decides and at what level. Reduce execution friction.	Decision-rights matrix with escalation protocols	<b>COO / CEO</b>
Wks 8–10	<b>Budgeting, Performance &amp; CFO Visibility</b>	Align capital, KPIs, and incentives with transformation outcomes.	Transformation scorecards with CFO dashboard	<b>CFO / COO</b>
Wks 8–12	<b>Support Functions Stress-Test</b>	Test whether governance can handle insurtech partnership velocity.	Sequenced governance playbook (pilot vs. production)	<b>CRO / GC</b>
Wks 12–15	<b>Talent Repositioning &amp; Momentum Signal</b>	Put execution leaders at the center. Replace isolated innovation with enterprise-backed credibility.	Named execution leaders with C-suite sponsorship	<b>CEO / CHRO</b>

An aerial night view of a city, likely New York City, showing a dense urban landscape with illuminated buildings and streets. A semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay is positioned in the center-left, containing white text. The background shows a mix of modern glass skyscrapers and older brick buildings, with a prominent street running vertically through the center-right. The sky is dark with some light clouds, and the city lights create a warm glow against the night.

# I. The Imperative: Turning Executive Pressure into Execution Momentum

**“Executive sponsorship is a must to drive transformational initiatives. However, this brings a natural conflict: The typical innovation cycle is five to ten years, but senior executives can only be as patient as up to three years. This is at the core of what is happening.”**

**— Global insurer, Senior Vice President**

## I. The Imperative: Turning Executive Pressure into Execution Momentum

CEOs and CFOs are demanding faster returns from transformation investments. The programs cannot deliver faster without structural change. This collision is the defining challenge for insurance leadership in 2026.

The COVID-19 pandemic sharply accelerated insurers’ technology agendas, forcing incumbents to digitize distribution, underwriting, claims, and back-office operations faster than planned. The insurtech startup ecosystem offers a powerful way to do so: startups operate at the forefront of innovation, move faster, and are structurally designed to iterate and adapt quickly. For established carriers and brokers, partnering with insurtechs can inject speed and experimentation into transformation efforts that would otherwise take years to materialize. This initial push gave way to a boom in insurtech funding around 2021, followed by three years of rapid AI-driven innovation that reshaped expectations across pricing, underwriting, claims, customer interaction, and back-office functions.

### The Insurtech Ecosystem Has Matured into a Credible Partner Landscape

The insurtech ecosystem has more than doubled since 2018, with the majority of recent investments being AI-focused. Newer insurtechs prioritize collaboration and measurable value delivery over disruption. Strategic investment interest from established insurers is also at an all-time high, signaling confidence not just in experimentation, but in partnership models that can operate under enterprise control (Gallagher Re, 2025).

1. Source: MLQ.ai, *State of AI in Business 2025 Report*, 2025

**Now, the industry has entered a “show-me-the-returns” moment.** Full-scope technology transformation in insurance can take years to deliver material value, sometimes discouraging C-suites from launching structural initiatives when returns are expected within 2-3 years. Insurance executive surveys indicate that AI spending focused on business model innovation is expected to double over the next two years. Against this backdrop, scrutiny is intensifying: capital commitments are growing while the timeline to realize returns remains long. Independent research reinforces this concern: only a limited subset of use cases has delivered tangible value to date. Across industries, 95% of Generative AI pilots fail to scale, according to MIT-backed research<sup>1</sup>. In insurance, this challenge is further magnified by structural execution barriers that this report identifies and addresses.

Insurtech startups also bring different operational realities compared with large vendors—less mature governance structures, evolving capabilities, and higher execution uncertainty. Hence, insurers must develop execution models that allow them to capture the speed and innovation advantages of insurtech partnerships while managing these inherent risks.

Scalable transformation does not require building every capability in-house. As Harvard Business Review research observes, as complexity and specialization rise, no single team or company has all the capabilities, tools, or authority required to move ideas from prototype to scale. Yet the same research warns that the more innovation relies on collaboration across organizational boundaries, the more likely initiatives are to stall—because the partnerships meant to deliver them break down.

**The implication is direct: the challenge is no longer finding the right insurtech partner, it is building the internal execution capability to make that partnership work.**



Harvard Business School research reinforces this point: scaling innovation through partnerships requires more than formal organizational structure. Cross-functional teams, dedicated project managers, and innovation labs are necessary but insufficient. What differentiates organizations that successfully scale is what researchers call “bridging”—the ability to curate partners, translate across their different priorities and constraints, and integrate their efforts into a coherent execution path<sup>2</sup>.

In a highly fragmented U.S. market with roughly 6,000 insurers including more than 1,300 mutuals, execution maturity remains uneven. What sets leading organizations apart is not ambition or access to insurtech partners, but enterprise-level execution discipline to balance speed with risk mitigation: clear priorities, aligned funding logic, fit-for-purpose governance, and sustained executive sponsorship. As scrutiny from CEOs and CFOs increases, leading insurers convert this pressure into focus—using it to clarify trade-offs, enforce sequencing, and protect execution momentum rather than repeatedly resetting pilots with insurtech partners.



2. Source: Harvard Business Review, *Why Great Innovations Fail to Scale*, March–April 2026



## II. Why Most Traditional Carriers Stumble on Execution



## II. Why Most Traditional Carriers Stumble on Execution

Access to technology and external partners has improved significantly. What remains difficult is converting these partnerships into measurable enterprise impact.

### Research Methodology






The Insurance Collaboration Index (ICI) Committee, under the leadership of Insurtech NY, surveyed 120+ insurtech founders—80% of whom have more than five years of founder-level insurance experience—to understand where collaboration with carriers succeeds and where it breaks down. Alvarez & Marsal analyzed the survey results and paired them with 20 in-depth interviews with senior insurance leaders who have successfully driven transformation initiatives and insurtech partnerships. The objective: identify structural patterns that consistently slow execution and understand how best practices address these barriers.



## Insurance Collaboration Index (ICI) Survey: What the Results Reveal

155 insurtech responses—80% from founders with more than five years of insurance industry experience—rated their partnership journeys with insurance carriers. Alvarez & Marsal analyzed the results and conducted 20 interviews with transformation leaders, identifying five recurring “execution barriers” that leading organizations address more effectively.

### ICI Survey Focus Areas

ICI Survey Focus Areas	% Responses with Low Rating*	Behind the Scenes: Five Structural Execution Barriers
<b>Executive Sponsorship</b> How effective was the executive sponsorship?	22%	 <b>Project Priority and IT Capacity Fog</b> Project value is not validated early against core business KPIs, leading to unclear prioritization and reactive IT resource allocation.
<b>Definition of Success</b> To what extent were success criteria clearly defined? (e.g. had clear metrics and criteria for successful completion)	41%	 <b>Budget-Accountability Misalignment</b> Transformation budgets are not sufficiently pre-allocated to the right business units, and functions are not consistently held accountable for delivering validated KPI targets.
<b>Resources</b> To what degree was the project adequately resourced by the insurer?	40%	
<b>Budget/Funding</b> How easy was financial/commercial negotiation with the insurer?	48%	 <b>Authority Ambiguity</b> Decision rights are unclear across business, IT, strategy, finance, and control functions.
<b>Decision-Making</b> How quickly were decisions made throughout the project lifecycle?	46%	
<b>Business &amp; IT Alignment</b> To what degree were the business and IT aligned on goals, priorities, scope, and business outcomes?	51%	 <b>Orchestration Gap</b> No empowered project leader and team ensuring end-to-end execution continuity across stakeholders.
<b>Issue Resolution</b> How effectively were project issues triaged and resolved with insurer counterparts?	42%	
<b>Due Diligence</b> How difficult or onerous was the insurer’s due diligence process?	58%	 <b>Control Rigidity</b> One-size-fits-all risk governance slows down pilots and POCs.

\*Insurtechs rated insurers on a scale of 1–7. “Low rating” refers to scores of 4 or below.



## What the Survey Results Tell Us

One finding stands out: execution frictions show up consistently and are visible to insurtech partners throughout the collaboration journey. Across focus areas, a significant share of respondents reported low ratings—showing how hard it is for carrier–insurtech engagements to progress from early alignment into delivery and scaled impact.

These results highlight where friction occurs. To understand why it persists, Alvarez & Marsal paired the survey data with 20 interviews conducted with transformation leaders who have successfully executed and scaled insurtech partnerships. This analysis identified five execution barriers—structural operating model constraints that leading organizations manage significantly more effectively than their peers.

## The Five Execution Barriers

Execution Barrier	What Happens	Estimated Cost of Inaction
<b>1. Priority &amp; IT Capacity Fog</b>	Initiatives enter the pipeline without validated economic impact. IT demand outpaces available capacity, and projects compete on narrative strength rather than validated value.	Up to six months of delay per initiative, with two to four strategic projects stalled simultaneously.
<b>2. Budget–Accountability Misalignment</b>	Budgets are centralized or episodic, while business-unit KPIs remain tied to short-term P&L performance. Post-pilot funding hesitation stalls momentum.	Six- to twelve-month “limbo” periods following pilots.
<b>3. Authority Ambiguity</b>	Decision rights are fragmented across functions, leaving no clear owner for go/no-go decisions. As a result, decisions stall or are repeatedly revisited.	Cycle times increase by 40–60%, eroding partnership trust.
<b>4. Orchestration Gap</b>	No empowered integrator ensures cross-functional continuity. Handoffs replace coordination and executive visibility gradually fades.	Initiatives fragment across four to six organizational silos, with AI partnerships particularly vulnerable.
<b>5. Control Rigidity</b>	One-size-fits-all governance is applied to early-stage pilots. Risk and legal teams are engaged late, defaulting to production-scale review processes.	Several months of review cycles for pilots intended to be time-boxed experiments.



### Barrier 1: Priority and IT Capacity Fog

Transformation initiatives often enter the pipeline without disciplined prioritization based on validated economic impact. Business cases may be directionally sound but are rarely pressure-tested against core KPI baselines before resources are requested. IT demand accumulates faster than capacity. Without enforced prioritization, projects compete on narrative strength rather than validated impact. IT teams, constrained by legacy architecture and maintenance burdens, often default to reactive resource allocation.

From the insurtech's perspective, this manifests as stalled integrations, shifting timelines, and sudden project cuts. From the carrier's perspective, it reinforces a perception that IT is "slow" — while in reality the demand funnel lacks discipline upstream. Best-practice organizations resolve this fog before the solution search begins: they validate problem scale early, link initiatives to measurable KPI targets, and stop efforts that cannot justify enterprise resource allocation.

#### Executive Action

Enforce value-based intake and full IT capacity transparency. Require all initiatives to demonstrate quantified KPI impact, validated business cases, and explicit capacity needs before entering the pipeline. In parallel, establish a transparent view of IT demand vs. available capacity to ensure resources are allocated to the highest-value priorities and fully utilized.



### Barrier 2: Budget–Accountability Misalignment

Funding and ownership are disconnected. Transformation budgets sit in one place; accountability sits in another. Budgets are frequently centralized or allocated episodically, while business-unit incentives remain tied to short-term financial performance. Even when pilots are approved, there is often no pre-allocated transformation budget for the relevant function, combined with KPI targets that hold the business unit directly accountable for outcomes.

Once initial pilot enthusiasm fades, initiatives face funding hesitation. Business units hesitate to absorb integration and scaling costs, and finance questions return assumptions. The underlying issue is not capital scarcity—it is incentive misalignment combined with disconnected budget allocation. Where funding and accountability move together, pilots convert into scaled programs. Where they diverge, pilots remain stuck in limbo.

#### Executive Action

Separate transformation budgets from maintenance funding. Tie approved initiative budgets directly to business-unit scorecards with measurable KPI targets. Require CFO sign-off linking funding to expected outcomes before pilots advance.



### Barrier 3: Authority Ambiguity

Carriers struggle with unclear decision rights across business, IT, strategy, finance, and control functions. As initiatives move through architectural reviews, risk assessments, procurement, and contracting, authority becomes fragmented. Who owns the go/no-go decision? Who arbitrates trade-offs between speed and risk? Who has the mandate to escalate bottlenecks?

Without defined escalation paths, decisions stall or are revisited repeatedly. Governance functions tend to default to caution, while business sponsors assume final authority sits elsewhere. This ambiguity increases cycle times by 40–60% and creates frustration for external partners. Insurtechs often interpret the delays as indecision, while internally, the issue reflects a structural diffusion of accountability.

#### Executive Action

Publish a decision-rights matrix for every active transformation initiative. Name a single decision-maker at each stage with documented escalation paths. Brief the executive committee within 30 days.



### Barrier 4: The Orchestration Gap

Low-rating survey categories—business and IT alignment, issue resolution, decision-making, and clarity around success metrics—suggest the absence of an empowered integrator responsible for maintaining cross-functional continuity. Traditional carriers are structurally siloed: business units, IT, finance, risk, procurement, and legal typically operate within clearly defined mandates. While this design helps protect control and compliance, it also complicates cross-functional execution.

Without a clearly empowered project leader who owns stakeholder management end-to-end, initiatives fragment. Handoffs replace coordination. Meeting cadence weakens after the pilot phase. Executive visibility fades unless escalations occur. Insurtech partnerships, particularly those involving AI, require tight iteration between business logic, data, integration architecture, and governance. When no single execution spine connects these threads, momentum dissipates.

Harvard Business Review research identifies this exact pattern: when organizations rely solely on structural solutions—project managers, governance frameworks, cross-functional committees—without investing in leaders who build trust across boundaries, partnerships break down. Successful organizations place individuals with deep emotional and contextual intelligence at the center as leaders of cross-boundary initiatives. In insurance, where startups value speed and carriers prioritize reliability, this gap is especially acute.

#### Executive Action

Appoint a named cross-functional execution leader for every strategic insurtech partnership. This person must have direct C-suite visibility, stakeholder management authority, and accountability from pilot through scaled deployment.



### Barrier 5: Control Rigidity

Insurance is a regulated industry, and rigorous governance is non-negotiable. But applying one-size-fits-all control frameworks to early-stage pilots introduces avoidable delays. Risk, legal, compliance, and procurement typically get pulled in late, after internal enthusiasm has built. Without early context, they default to full production-stage reviews.

The issue is not that standards are too high—it is that sequencing is missing. Best-practice organizations differentiate between pilot-stage and production-stage requirements. They define a small set of non-negotiable checks upfront while phasing additional controls as initiatives progress toward scale. When governance is sequenced rather than diluted, speed and rigor coexist.





# III. The Six-Stage Lifecycle



## III. The Six-Stage Lifecycle

To consistently unlock value from insurtech partnerships, carriers need a repeatable framework: a **Disciplined Transformation Accelerator**. Not a traditional IT pipeline. Not ad hoc innovation. A cross-functional, time-boxed, stage-gate approach built for regulated environments.



“Insurance companies have a radar screen for what is available, but this is not just about ‘shining objects.’ There needs to be a problem-first approach focused on the priorities of the core business units as the company goes through priority setting and budgeting.”

— Global Insurance Broker, Senior Insurtech Executive

## Stage 1 — Problem Validation: Prove the Problem Before You Fund It

**Disciplined focus precedes technology. Organizations that validate problem scale, link initiatives to KPI baselines, and pre-allocate funding before searching for solutions build the strongest execution momentum.**



Interview after interview confirmed the same pattern: transformation either accelerates or quietly dies long before a solution is selected. One U.S. carrier described a formal stage-gate process before inception, where every idea is screened against enterprise strategic priorities before metrics are discussed. A global insurer shifted from broad innovation themes to a tightly focused agenda around just a few required core capabilities. Another global insurer shared how its strategy team meets with country CEOs to surface local priorities, elevating only problems that are strategic, sizeable, and scalable.

Who leads problem discovery matters as much as how it is structured. Several cases featured empowered operators who report into both strategy and technology leadership, combining cross-functional credibility with deep business experience. These individuals had built careers across finance, underwriting, claims, operations, and PMO roles—earning trust across middle management. Their role was not to generate ideas, but to run structured, time-boxed reviews, challenge assumptions, and force early go/no-go decisions.

The most advanced organizations tied problem discovery directly to capital. They separated change budgets from maintenance funds, pre-allocated those funds to business units, and linked validated problems to sponsorship, funding pools, and scorecard KPIs. Finance was brought in early to test the true size of the prize. Initiatives without proven impact were stopped fast. Those that passed received explicit ownership and resource commitment—giving insurtech partners a clearer mandate to execute against.

### Executive Action

Establish a formal pre-inception gate. Validate every initiative against enterprise KPIs with CFO-supplied baselines before entering the solution search pipeline. Stop initiatives that cannot prove their economic impact.



## Stage 1: Problem Validation



## What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- **Core business units own** the problems; while an **an empowered facilitator or facilitation team** orchestrates a structured, visible, repeatable problem discovery process and hence facilitates acceleration of all upcoming stages.
- Problem identification is anchored in **operational and strategic KPIs, budget cycles, and strategic planning timelines** — not intuition or tech “noise.”
- Initiative prioritization is guided by **strategic focus areas** and expected business value contribution, rigorously eliminating low-impact or misaligned items early.
- Every prioritized problem includes preliminary articulation of the **target KPIs, high-level solution needs, expected benefits, and an anticipated time horizon** for all these elements.
- **A fast but disciplined cadence** (regular cross-functional check-ins, KPI reviews, process mining, pain-point diagnostics) supports the problem validation and prioritization process, leading to a short but high-impact problem funnel.



## Key Pre-Requisites

- **KPI structures**, budgeting, strategic planning and performance management cycles tightly connected to each other
- **Visible C-suite sponsorship** empowering the facilitator yet reinforcing that business units remain owners.
- **Agreement on enterprise-level strategic priorities/ focus areas** that will guide what qualifies as a “worthy” problem.



## Expected Outcomes

- A concise list of **few but high-impact problems**, each tied to strategic priorities and having early business-case framing.
- Business units begin to seek out the empowered facilitator(s) proactively, as a sign of **reduced learned helplessness and increased ownership**.
- **Clear business value inputs** that feed directly into the solution search and facilitate further business case refinement as well as resource allocation.



## DO

- **Force every business unit to quantify its problem before discussion.** In advance work on KPIs, baselines, and impact estimates help fast prioritization.
- **Run structured “challenge sessions” for each business unit.** A neutral facilitator pushes teams to defend assumptions, scope, and urgency.
- **Time-box the entire discovery cycle.** Prevent months-long wandering and accelerates readiness for solution search.



## DON'T

- **Don't turn the discovery process into ‘extra bureaucracy’ for business units.** Keep it systematic, transparent, time-boxed and ensure utmost collaboration and ultra-fast support from the empowered facilitator(s) as the ‘role model’.
- **Don't over-centralize and sideline business units.** The facilitator(s) guide systematically, while business units stay in the driver seat.
- **Don't let any tiny, ‘leftover’ problem go into the problem funnel.** Low-impact problems bring less ownership and inefficient execution in later stages.

“What really does not work is teams being pushed to explore a specific vendor/partner just because the perception is that the partner is ‘good’. If there is no framework on what the firm would like to get out of a partnership, it is not an effective practice.”

— Global Insurer, Chief Innovation Officer

## Stage 2 — Problem-Led Selection: Let the Problem Choose the Partner

**Solution search is where insurers may inadvertently reintroduce noise. Leading organizations begin selection only after problem clarity, defined KPI targets, and business-case boundaries are in place. The problem—not the vendor—anchors the discussion.**



In organizations that struggle, solution conversations begin with vendor exposure rather than a validated business need. In contrast, leading insurers begin solution search only after problem clarity is established. Executives described structured evaluation forums where business, IT, governance, and control functions review partnership options against predefined criteria rather than informal preferences.

In one case, a carrier formalized a multi-dimensional scoring rubric assessing technical architecture, industry fit, team quality, scalability, and long-term roadmap—preventing decisions from falling back on familiarity or perceived safety. In another, “decision-makers versus advisors” were defined in advance, ensuring that architectural feasibility was reviewed without allowing legacy constraints to dictate the strategic choice.

How insurers decided whether to partner at all was equally important. Core differentiators—such as underwriting logic, pricing sophistication—required a different decision lens than peripheral capabilities. Leading organizations weighed speed to market, control, capital intensity, and integration complexity before choosing their path. Structures ranged from service agreements to co-development, minority investments, or acquisitions.

### Executive Action

Define evaluation criteria before engaging vendors. Pre-determine who decides vs. who advises. Match the partnership model to the strategic importance of the capability.



## Stage 2: Problem-Led Selection



### What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- Solution search begins **only after true problem clarity**, KPI targets, and early business-case expectations are defined.
- **Decision-making is multi-dimensional**, not just based on legacy IT tendencies.
- **A structured evaluation process balances speed and rigor**, with visibility to the evaluation logic by all parties.
- IT, governance and control functions **act as advisors**, providing strong input without 'driving' the strategic choices.
- **Partnering is also chosen with a strategic lens**, not through a one-size-fits-all procurement/vendor selection approach.



### Key Pre-Requisites

- **Validated problems** with defined KPI targets for improvement, boundaries and expected benefits from Stage 1.
- A **preliminary business case ready** to be refined based on partner discussions and observed market realities.
- **Senior-leadership commitment to fast decision-making** and avoidance of tactical biases (e.g., "we only work with big vendors")



### Expected Outcomes

- **A short list of a few strategically aligned partners** that meet the true needs of the problem and are ready to collaborate on any side-implications.
- **Preliminary view on the partnership type** that reflects the strategic importance of the solution.
- **A refined business case** with updated cost/benefit estimates and early timeline assumptions.



### DO

- **Build a constant market-scanning network.** Create a network of Insurtech veterans to surface all options fast — especially critical for smaller carriers that can't afford internal resources for this purpose
- **Use a holistic, objective evaluation rubric for decisions.** Balance speed and control through multi-dimensional decision-making
- **Authorize the most open-minded internal SMEs.** Work with people in IT, data, legal, etc. who can really think beyond their function's legacy tendencies



### DON'T

- **Don't allow big, legacy vendors to crowd out niche players.** Doing this just because it's 'safe' may limit the flexibility to design a strategic partnership tailored to the objectives defined in Stage 1.
- **Don't run the process with IT or procurement lenses only.** Their frameworks alone won't identify strategic partners and will materially slow-down the process.
- **Don't ignore existing governance processes.** Don't try to bypass them; instead, map them, track them, accelerate them by coordinating steps early and working with support functions to simplify them.

Leading insurers do not automatically fall back on established vendors because they feel safer. They recognize that different transformation needs require different partners and partnership models. **When speed to market, access to frontier capabilities, and flexibility matter most, insurtech startups offer clear advantages.** When the objective is to secure a core capability in-house, maintain maximum control, or avoid integration complexity, building internally or relying on a larger vendor may be more appropriate. The key is to make this choice deliberately, against explicit decision criteria, rather than through habit, internal bias, or procurement convention.

This is why leading organizations use a structured decision framework before selecting a partner. They weigh trade-offs such as speed, control, customization, capital intensity, talent needs, and integration complexity—while also considering the strategic importance of the capability itself. **In this context, partnering with insurtech startups should be viewed not simply as vendor selection, but as a broader strategic option that can take multiple forms depending on the objective:** from pure service relationships to co-development arrangements, minority investments, or even acquisition. The framework below illustrates how leading insurers think through these choices objectively.

### Why, When and How to Collaborate with Insurtechs

Working with Insurtechs brings a unique potential to balance speed with control for established players, especially if the partner scouting is conducted and partnership method is chosen objectively with discipline.

#### A Framework for Technology Investment Decision-Making

Decision-Making Criteria	Build In-House	Work with Large Vendor	Work with Insurtech
Speed to Market	Low	Medium-High	High
Ability to Secure the Solution as Core Competency	High	Low	Medium
Level of Control Achievable	High	Low	Medium-High
Customization Flexibility	High	Low	Medium-High
Upfront Capital Requirement	High	Low	Low-Medium
Ability to Keep Pace with AI Tech Evolution	Low	High	High
Need for In-House Talent	High	Low	Low-Medium
Integration Complexity Issues	Low	Low-Medium	Medium to High

#### Several Partnership Options Depending on Objectives

- Pure Buy: Insurtech gets paid for service
- Multi-year contract for solution co-development
- Minority Stake Investment
- Majority Stake Investment with Exclusivity
- Acquisition

**“We establish squads consisting of subject matter experts appointed by the C-suite of the core business unit. If the pilot result is positive, the same established project team needs to bring the solution into life.”**

**— Global Insurer, Head of Innovation**

### Stage 3 — Operator Empowerment: Name the Operator, Back the Operator

**A decision-ready, empowered project team that runs the process end-to-end—from validation through rollout—is the single strongest predictor of whether a validated opportunity converts into measurable results.**



Success depended heavily on whether a single, empowered team truly owned the outcome end-to-end. In organizations that scaled insurtech partnerships successfully, the project team was not a temporary experiment group. It was structured as the execution engine for the initiative from validation through rollout, with clear authority and visible executive backing.

Cases showed the importance of appointing a respected operator—someone with cross-functional credibility and a deep understanding of how the organization actually works. These facilitators managed stakeholders, influenced middle management, navigated resistance, and removed barriers. Where such leadership existed, stakeholder friction decreased and decisions moved faster.

This finding aligns with independent Harvard Business School research identifying three core functions these cross-boundary leaders perform: they curate the right partners for each stage, translate across the different priorities and risk tolerances of business, IT, and governance functions, and integrate disparate efforts into a single execution path. They succeed not through formal authority alone, but by building mutual trust, mutual influence, and mutual commitment across partners who would otherwise operate in isolation.

#### **Executive Action**

Appoint a named cross-functional execution leader with direct C-suite visibility for every strategic insurtech partnership. This person stays through the scaling—not just experimentation.



## Stage 3: Operator Empowerment



### What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- **A single, empowered cross-functional team accountable end-to-end** from the validated business case through full rollout and KPI realization. The team is structured as the “execution machine”, not just a temporary pilot squad.
- **A respected, execution-oriented project leader** with deep credibility and experience in the organization managing stakeholders and removing execution blockers.
- **Decision-ready team composition**, consisting of members selected for both expertise and authority, avoiding committee-driven dilution of ownership
- **Integrated collaboration with the insurtech partner** as part of the core execution team, aligned to the same KPI outcomes.



### Key Pre-Requisites

- **Clear business-unit ownership** of the validated KPIs and outcomes from Stage 1
- **Visible executive sponsorship** empowering the team to make decisions without repeated escalations
- **Explicit decision rights defined upfront** across business, IT, risk, and governance functions.



### Expected Outcomes

- **Handoff gaps limited** between innovation and implementation, preventing dilution into legacy IT pipelines.
- **Faster issue resolution and reduced internal friction** in later stages.
- **Stronger stakeholder alignment**, as the project leader anticipates resistance and coordinates across functions.



### DO

- **Appoint a project leader with cross-functional fluency and connectivity.** Prior experience across functions builds trust and influence.
- **Select team members so that the need to delegate decisions up is minimal.** If someone is in the room, they must be empowered to commit.
- **Assume core project team members will stay until the end of the initiative.** The team should treat POC as the ‘beginning of execution’, not an ‘experiment’.



### DON'T

- **Don't split ownership across phases.** Leverage the project team setup process to avoid/limit handoffs that will reset accountability.
- **Don't overload the team with observers who lack decision authority.** Large rooms with limited empowerment create delay disguised as governance.
- **Don't treat stakeholder management as secondary to technical delivery.** Unmanaged middle-layer resistance and unclear expectations silently stall execution.

**“We mapped every governance step in advance. Once we saw the full flowchart, we could anticipate and parallelize. That cut our POC and review timeline by two-thirds.”**

**— U.S. Carrier, Head of Innovation**

## Stage 4 — Decision Engine: A Decision Engine, Not a Waiting Room

**The difference between stalled pilots and scaled solutions was rarely technical. It was about how trials were structured, governed, and owned. Validation works when it functions as a disciplined decision engine, not a waiting room.**



One carrier reduced its average POC duration from six months to two by mapping every governance step in advance and running reviews in parallel rather than sequentially. Another made 60 days the informal ceiling—anything longer was treated as a signal that ownership, scope, or KPIs were unclear.

Leading insurers treat the POC as the first phase of execution, not an isolated experiment. Business units confirm KPI targets before the pilot starts and signal follow-up funding if targets are met—in some cases through letters of intent. Pilot teams are cross-functional squads built so that the same team carries forward if results are positive. Metrics on growth, efficiency, or customer impact are tracked throughout, not after the fact.

Governance handling was another consistent edge. Rather than discovering new review steps mid-pilot, leading organizations mapped legal, risk, IT security, and compliance requirements in advance. They locked in a small set of non-negotiable checks for early validation and phased the rest. Pilot contracts were simplified. Security questionnaires focused on critical controls first. What had taken four to six months was reduced to weeks—without lowering risk standards.

### Executive Action

Cap POC duration at 60 days. Map all governance steps before launch. Require business-unit confirmation of KPI targets and follow-up funding readiness as prerequisites for the pilot start.



## Stage 4: Decision Engine



## What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- **POCs are aggressively time-boxed** with measurable targets and run by a subset, if not all, of the **actual team that will be accountable for full implementation and expected benefits later on.**
- Legal requirements of POCs are right-sized to avoid turning the legal process for a POC into a quasi-final contract.
- During the trials and reviews, **business units, IT, facilitator(s) and the insurtech partner collaborate in an agile cadence**, using early findings to refine the business case further.
- **Review scopes are tailored** to the problem, business case, and operational implications — not through pre-existing, one-size-fits all large checklists.
- **Reviews balance speed and sufficiency**, avoiding over-engineering but never failing to address key security and compliance risks.



## Key Pre-Requisites

- **Strong partnership shortlist, clear strategic rationale and refined business case** from Stage 2.
- **Initial accountable team ready for the POC**, with known operational touchpoints to support.
- **Continued C-suite visibility** proving to all supporting functions that the initiative is a priority.



## Expected Outcomes

- **Objective evidence of whether the solution works** — and where it breaks.
- **Clear visibility into operational implications** (e.g., underwriting actions, customer/distribution impacts, regulatory actions needed).
- **A realistic, refined business case** with updated cost, benefit, and timeline assumptions, considering all operational implications.
- **A solid foundation for officializing incentives with all the above.**



## DO

- **Make POC approval fast and pre-funded, assuming solid work in Stages 1-2.** Have budget ready, require minimal sign-offs, and move to POC *quickly if the outcomes of Stages 1 and 2 are solid.*
- **Set up the POC for success from day one.** Define the right users, data, KPIs, and scenarios early — and secure their time *before kickoff.*
- **Prepare the team for an immediate post-POC decision.** If results meet the pre-set criteria, trigger contracting and full implementation fast.



## DON'T

- **Don't start the POC without real resource availability.** If participants can't commit time and resources, the POC will produce false signals.
- **Don't treat positive user feedback as the sole indicator of success.** People often "like" the tech itself but true success is measured strictly against the pre-agreed KPIs in Stages 1 and 2.
- **Don't let security and compliance needs hit the partner as a late surprise.** Share requirements early, make the process transparent, and give the partner time to prepare.

**“Commercial alignment happens first between business counterparts. Legal then codifies—they don’t reopen the debate. That’s the discipline that gets contracts done in weeks, not months.”**

**— Senior Insurance Executive, Global Insurer**

## Stage 5 — Pre-Scale Commitment: Commit Before You Scale

**Once the POC validates the business case, leading organizations move quickly to lock in incentives—both with the insurtech partner and within their own organizations. This is not a legal afterthought; it is the deliberate alignment step that determines whether momentum accelerates or stalls.**



Externally, best practices convert refined business cases into success-based commercial structures tied directly to pre-agreed KPI targets. Commercial alignment happens first between business counterparts before legal drafting begins. Legal teams, already familiar with the initiative from earlier stages, codify terms efficiently rather than reopening fundamental debates. Initial agreements are often structured with calibrated scope and duration, reducing perceived risk while preserving flexibility for extensions.

Internally, the same rigor applies. Leading insurers formalize business-unit commitments before full rollout through documented performance commitments specifying KPI targets, funding readiness, and ownership responsibilities.

Transformation budgets sit with the business unit that owns the problem, and that same unit faces accountability through embedded scorecard metrics. Empowerment and accountability move together, preventing loss of momentum and formalizing alignment across all parties.

### Executive Action

Structure commercial terms around measurable outcomes. Formalize business-unit performance commitments—with KPI targets, funding, and ownership—before full rollout authorization.



## Stage 5: Pre-Scale Commitment



### What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- **Incentives are officialized between all parties based on the refined business case**, with success-based terms tied to pre-determined KPI targets.
- Legal teams are informed about the whole process-based framework and **engaged early (at the latest by Stage 2) on each opportunity** to understand context and avoid late-stage slowdowns.
- **Specialized external counsels are used as needed** to avoid generic, risk-averse bottlenecks associated with one-size-fits-all legal approaches.
- During contracting, business negotiations and legal drafting/red-lining **remain as separate but coordinated efforts** with business alignment reached first, facilitating the completion of the legal terms.



### Key Pre-Requisites

- **Completed POC, due diligence and reviews** with measurable learnings and a validated business case.
- **Clear articulation of performance metrics from the business case**, to be leveraged while developing success-based terms for the contract.
- **Early involvement of legal teams** to ensure they understand this whole process-based framework.



### Expected Outcomes

- Throughout the contracting processes, **incentives aligned amongst all parties including the insurtech partner and tied to the same KPI outcomes**.
- **Officialized incentives and signed agreements reached in days or weeks, not months**, after POC.
- **Reduced friction with legal for similar future partnerships** via early stakeholder involvement, simplified templates and expert legal resources where needed.



### DO

- **Design success-based performance structures for contracting purposes.** Leverage success-based structures for just performance improvement and risk management.
- **Agree business terms earlier with the partner.** Minimize need for back-and-forth redlining by guiding legal on what is 'pre-agreed'.
- **Work to simplify existing contract templates.** Strip out irrelevant legacy clauses and tighten language to speed review and reduce back-and-forth.



### DON'T

- **Don't treat the contracts as a risk-only document.** Ensure the agreement also protects delivery speed and KPI achievement — not just legal exposure.
- **Don't allow silence or long turnaround times between iterations.** If the work is solid in the stages prior to contracting, contracting process itself should not take months.
- **Don't allow redlines to drift into theoretical scenarios.** Keep negotiations focused on high-probability, high-impact risks — not edge cases.

**“We kept meeting cadence intense—multiple times per week—before stabilizing into a weekly rhythm once execution was on track. Scaling requires proximity, pace, and visible accountability.”**

**— Senior Vice President, U.S. Carrier**

## Stage 6 — Post-Launch Accountability: Go-Live Is Not the Finish Line

**Successful organizations do not treat rollout as a handoff. Ownership must remain intact, decision-making must stay empowered, and KPI accountability must extend well beyond the launch.**



Organizations that successfully scaled treated rollout as a continuation of ownership—not a handoff. In several cases, the same cross-functional squad that ran the pilot continued into full deployment, directly accountable to senior leadership for delivering predefined KPI targets rather than “transitioning” the initiative into a generic IT pipeline.

Leaders were emphatic: agile delivery was a structural choice, not a slogan. Business, IT, and the Insurtech partners operated as one team, with developers embedded in day-to-day flow. When bottlenecks emerged, empowered decision-makers were already in the room. Escalation paths kept resolution times to days, not months. Keeping C-suite visibility high—without micromanagement—enabled rapid intervention and reinforced commitment.

Leading insurers did not declare success at go-live. KPI tracking continued for months and then fed into multi-year projections that corporate planning teams reviewed quarterly with the C-suite. This sustained measurement surfaced early adoption gaps, reinforced accountability, and allowed for course correction before value erosion occurred.

### Executive Action

Maintain the pilot team through deployment.  
Embed KPI tracking into quarterly C-suite reviews.  
Do not declare success at go-live—track for a minimum of two quarters post-launch.



## Stage 6: Post-Launch Accountability



## What Leading Organizations Strive to Achieve

- The **same core project team members** continue from the POC into implementation, as they are **fully accountable for the pre-defined business-case KPI targets**.
- **Agile PM methodologies replace old waterfall patterns**, fostering continuous alignment among business, IT, and the Insurtech partner.
- **Project team selection and day-to-day governance allow fast, empowered decision-making**, especially during bottleneck periods that require intervention.
- **Enterprise PMO** acts as the main orchestrator, balancing IT realities with business urgency and serving as the ambassador of the strategic priorities and the business case.
- **C-suite maintains visibility** to enable fast escalation and recognition of wins.



## Key Pre-Requisites

- A **signed performance-aligned contract and refined business case ready** to be tracked against actuals.
- Project team members selected amongst **empowered decision-makers**.
- **Operational clarity about downstream impacts** (e.g., claims, underwriting, distribution, regulatory) to help create a healthy project plan



## Expected Outcomes

- **Deployment that hits KPI targets or identifies gaps early enough** for corrective action.
- **Reduced friction between the functions** as the whole model becomes repeatable.
- **Intense organizational learning leading to a scalable model** for future Insurtech engagements.



## DO

- **Keep a tight cadence and fast decision-making.** Set frequent huddles, clear owners, and escalation rules to keep momentum high.
- **Hold the project team accountable and incentivize them for KPI delivery.** Translate targets into team-level commitments and review progress continuously.
- **Empower the partner to push back when they receive contradictory guidance.** All feedback to the startup must be routed through one designated lead.

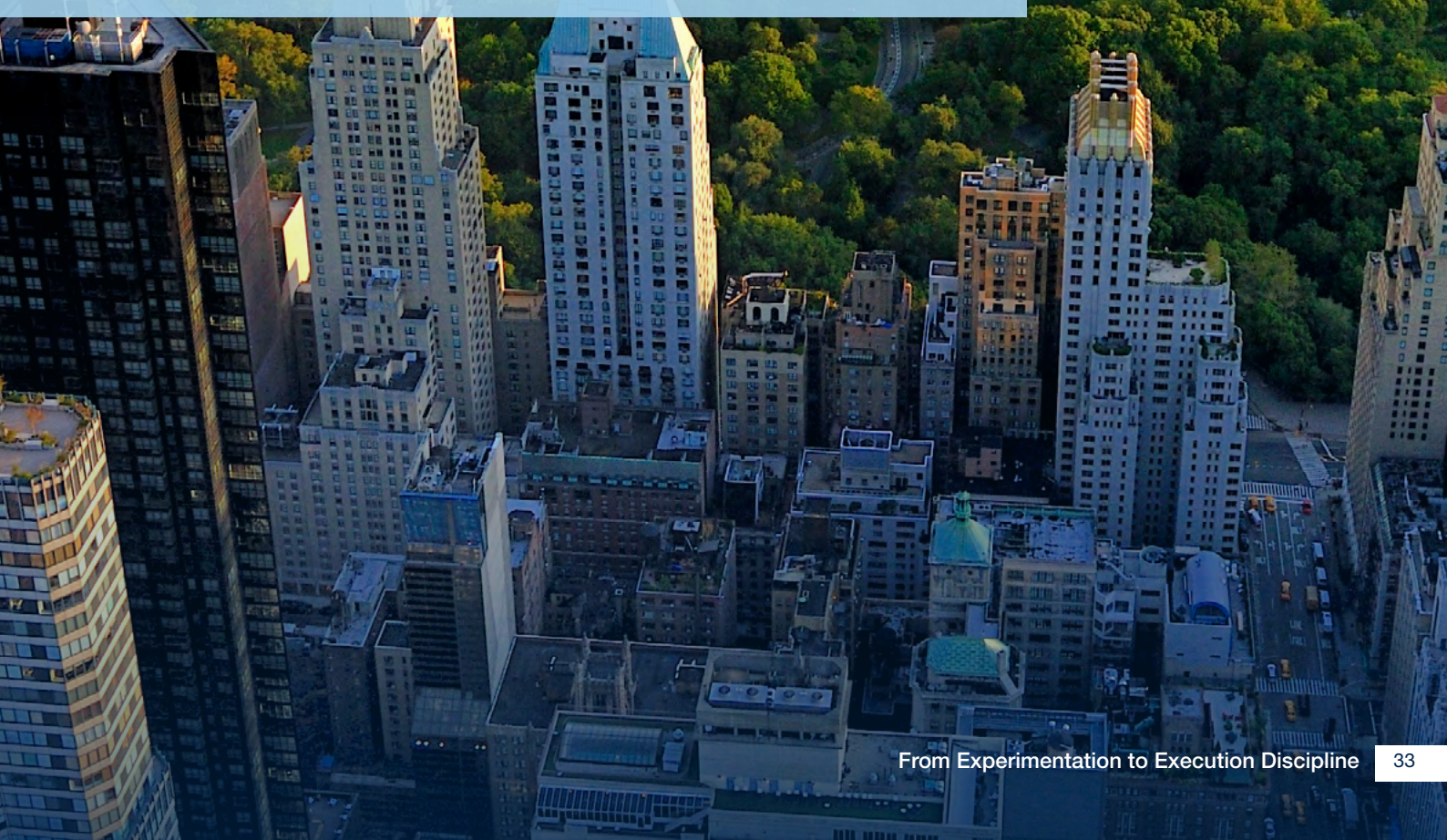


## DON'T

- **Don't allow project team members to "delegate up" decisions.** Set clear authority levels; if someone is in the room, they must be able to decide.
- **Don't over-engineer releases.** Plan sprints well to avoid "big-bang" builds that delay value and hide problems until late.
- **Don't stop tracking benefits after go-live.** Stopping KPI measurement early kills accountability and makes impact invisible.



# IV. The 100-Day Readiness Plan



## IV. The 100-Day Readiness Plan

Each phase addresses specific execution barriers from Section II, with named accountability, clear deliverables, and success metrics. Phases are sequenced: each builds on the outputs of prior phases.

### Weeks 1–3: Hard Reality Check on Current Portfolio

**Accountable:** COO / Chief Transformation Officer / Innovation Lead | **Addresses:** Barrier 1 (Priority Fog) | **Dependency:** None — this is the foundation

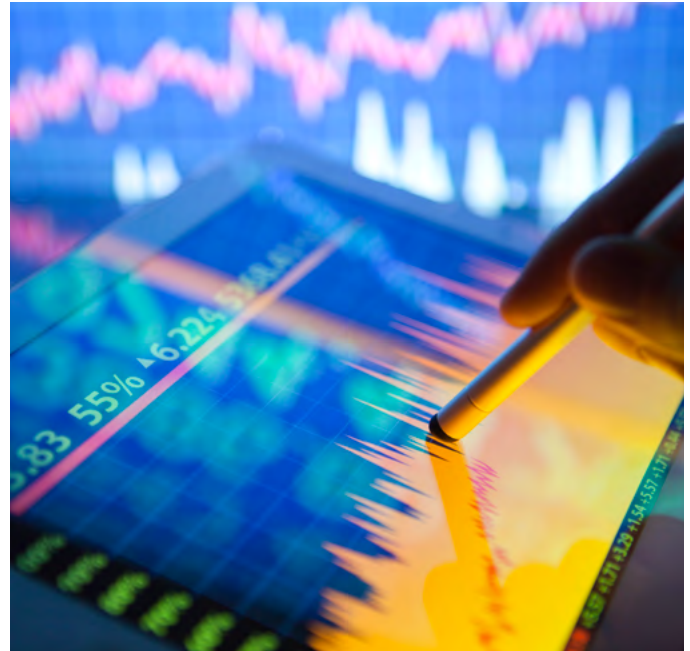
**Objective: Expose noise before adding new initiatives.**

Inventory all active initiatives, pilots, and vendor engagements across business units. Revalidate the size of prize and strategic relevance using current KPI targets and financial baselines. Identify and stop stalled, duplicative, or non-prioritized efforts consuming leadership and IT capacity.

**Deliverable:** Rationalized initiative portfolio with each remaining initiative mapped to a validated KPI target, named sponsor, and resource commitment.

**Success Metric:** Portfolio reduced by 20–40%. Remaining initiatives have documented economic justification.

**Risk Flag:** *Political resistance from sponsors of deprioritized initiatives. Secure CEO backing before communicating decisions.*



### Weeks 3–5: IT Capacity & Pipeline Transparency

**Accountable:** CIO / CTO / Innovation Lead | **Addresses:** Barrier 1 (Priority Fog) | **Dependency:** Requires rationalized portfolio from Weeks 1–3

**Objective: Separate strategic execution from operational firefighting.**

Build a transparent view of IT demand vs. real delivery capacity. Distinguish validated strategic initiatives from ad-hoc requests and understand their root causes. Identify where transformational budgets are being absorbed by maintenance and reactive work.

**Deliverable:** Demand-vs.-capacity map showing the strategic-to-reactive ratio with redirectable capacity identified.

**Success Metric:** Clear identification of available capacity for the top 3–5 initiatives.

**Risk Flag:** *IT leadership may understate reactive burden to protect headcount. Validate with independent capacity audit.*



## Weeks 5–8: Decision Rights & Ownership Reset

**Accountable:** COO / CEO | **Addresses:** Barrier 3 (Authority Ambiguity) | **Dependency:** Informed by the capacity constraints identified in Weeks 3–5

**Objective: Clarify who decides and at what level.**

Map decision rights for transformational initiatives across strategy, business units, IT, and finance. Define clear accountability for validating problem scale and advancing priority initiatives. Establish escalation protocols for execution bottlenecks.

**Deliverable:** Published decision-rights matrix with named owners and defined escalation paths, approved by the executive committee.

**Success Metric:** Every active transformation initiative has a single named decision-maker with documented authority.

**Risk Flag:** *Risk of triggering a perceived reorganization. Frame as decision-rights clarity, not structural change.*



## Weeks 8–10: Budgeting, Performance Management & CFO Visibility

**Accountable:** CFO / COO | **Addresses:** Barrier 2 (Budget–Accountability Misalignment) | **Dependency:** Requires validated priorities and decision-rights clarity from the prior phases

**Objective: Align capital and incentives with transformation outcomes.**

Review how change budgets are allocated across business units and IT. Revisit performance evaluation to ensure approved initiatives are tied to measurable KPI targets embedded in scorecards. Establish CFO-level visibility into spend vs. realized business impact.

**Deliverable:** Updated transformation scorecards with KPI targets in business-unit reviews. CFO dashboard for spend vs. realized impact.

**Success Metric:** 100% of approved initiatives have linked budget, KPI targets, and named business-unit accountability.

**Risk Flag:** *BU leaders may resist scorecard linkage to transformation KPIs mid-cycle. Align with the annual planning cycle where possible.*

## Weeks 8–12: Support Functions Stress-Test

**Accountable:** Chief Risk Officer / General Counsel / Innovation Lead | **Addresses:** Barrier 5 (Control Rigidity) | **Dependency:** Can run in parallel with the Weeks 8–10 budgeting phase

**Objective:** Test whether governance can handle insurtech partnership velocity.

Map end-to-end due-diligence flows and resource constraints across risk, legal, compliance, IT security, procurement, and data governance. Identify critical pilot-stage requirements versus production-stage requirements that can be phased. Define time-boxed review expectations and decision checkpoints.

**Deliverable:** Sequenced governance playbook distinguishing pilot-stage from production-stage requirements, with defined SLAs per review function.

**Success Metric:** Pilot-stage governance review cycle reduced to four weeks or less.

**Risk Flag:** Control functions may view phased governance as lowering standards. Frame this explicitly as sequencing rigor, not reducing it.



## Weeks 12–15: Talent Repositioning & Momentum Signal

**Accountable:** CEO / CHRO | **Addresses:** Barrier 4 (Orchestration Gap) | **Dependency:** Requires all prior phases to be substantially complete to inform leader selection and mandate  
**Objective:** Put execution leaders at the center.

Identify cross-functional operators with deep business knowledge and proven stakeholder management ability as transformation and innovation leaders. Harvard Business Review research suggests looking for individuals who already work successfully at organizational boundaries—those who build networks across functions, assemble cross-group teams, and navigate different operating models. Develop them through boundary-spanning roles and cross-functional rotations. Officially empower them to run the full insurtech partnership lifecycle. Create structured C-suite visibility into their execution efforts—and recognize their contributions publicly, since cross-boundary leaders often go unrecognized.

**Deliverable:** Named execution leaders for each priority partnership, with formal C-suite sponsorship and a regular reporting cadence to the executive committee.

**Success Metric:** Execution leaders identified, empowered, and operating with executive committee visibility within 100 days.

**Risk Flag:** Best candidates may already be in high-demand roles. Require a CEO-level mandate to reassign.



# V. What Insurtech Leaders Can Do



## V. What Insurtech Leaders Can Do

The preceding sections address the carrier's execution challenge. But execution is a two-sided equation. The insights from our 20 carrier interviews reveal what insurtech founders and CEOs can do differently to align with how leading insurers actually make decisions, structure partnerships, and scale initiatives. The guidance below translates the six-stage lifecycle into concrete actions for the insurtech side of the table.

**Insurtech CEOs and founders who understand the carrier's internal execution constraints—and proactively address them in their engagement approach—dramatically increase their probability of scaling beyond the pilot stage.**



### Demonstrate Execution Readiness, Not Just Features

Carriers following disciplined evaluation processes (Stage 2) assess partners against predefined criteria including technical architecture, integration readiness, team quality, and scalability. Insurtech leaders should proactively address these dimensions rather than leading with feature demonstrations. Provide reference architectures, integration timelines, and evidence of successful enterprise deployments. Show that your team understands the carrier's legacy environment constraints.

### Structure Proposals Around the Carrier's Decision Architecture

Understanding how carriers make decisions—and who holds authority at each stage—allows insurtech leaders to tailor their engagement. Provide materials that serve both the business sponsor (value proposition, KPI impact) and the technical evaluator (architecture, security, data governance). Pre-build the artifacts that governance functions need: security questionnaires completed proactively, data handling frameworks documented, and compliance considerations addressed upfront.

### Design Contract and KPI Structures That Accelerate Trust

Leading carriers want success-based commercial structures tied to measurable outcomes (Stage 5). Insurtech leaders who propose outcome-linked pricing, phased commitments, and clear exit provisions reduce perceived risk for carrier procurement and legal teams. A structured pilot with pre-agreed KPI targets and a clear path to scaling demonstrates an optimization for long-term partnership, not short-term revenue.

### Invest in Cross-Functional Engagement Capability

The orchestration gap (Barrier 4) exists on both sides. Insurtechs that assign a dedicated, senior partnership lead—someone who can navigate business, IT, and governance conversations with equal credibility—mirror the carrier's execution leader and create the cross-functional alignment that makes partnerships work. This is not a sales function; it is an enterprise engagement function.



# Appendices

# Appendix A: Execution Maturity Self-Assessment

Rate each dimension honestly to identify your highest-impact improvement opportunities.

Stage	Developing (1–2)	Established (3–4)	Advanced (5)
<b>1. Problem Validation</b>	Ideas enter ad hoc. No validated sizing. IT demand unmanaged.	Strategic screening exists but inconsistently applied. Business cases lack CFO baselines.	Formal pre-inception gate. All initiatives linked to KPIs. Finance supplies baselines. Weak ideas stopped fast.
<b>2. Problem-Led Selection</b>	Vendor-led conversations. Selection based on familiarity. No formal criteria.	Evaluation criteria exist. Some structured review. Build-vs.-buy decisions ad hoc.	Problem-first evaluation. Multi-dimensional rubric. Decision-maker vs. advisor roles predefined.
<b>3. Operator Empowerment</b>	Temporary project groups. No single owner. Coordinator role only.	Dedicated team but limited authority. Escalation unclear. Executive visibility sporadic.	Empowered cross-functional operator with executive backing. Team structured for the full lifecycle.
<b>4. Decision Engine</b>	Open-ended pilots. No time cap. KPIs defined after the fact.	Time-boxed POCs but KPIs inconsistent. Governance not parallelized.	60-day cap. Pre-committed KPIs and funding. Parallel governance. Structured learning plans.
<b>5. Pre-Scale Commitment</b>	Standard vendor contracts. No outcome linkage. BU commitment informal.	Some outcome-based terms. Business commitment verbal. Contracting takes months.	Success-based structures. Formal BU performance commitments. Contracting in weeks.
<b>6. Post-Launch Accountability</b>	Handoff to IT at go-live. KPI tracking ends. No post-launch accountability.	Some team continuity. KPIs exist but not embedded in C-suite reviews.	Same team through deployment. KPIs in quarterly C-suite reviews. Course correction embedded.

**Scoring 1–2 across multiple stages?** Start with the 100-Day Plan before launching new partnerships. **At 3–4?** Focus on specific stage gaps. **At 5 across most stages?** You are positioned to operate the full lifecycle at speed.

# Appendix B: Methodology

**Quantitative Component:** The ICI survey collected 155 responses from 120+ insurtech founders and senior leaders, 80% of whom have more than five years of founder-level insurance industry experience. Respondents rated their partnership journeys with traditional carriers across multiple dimensions of the collaboration lifecycle.

**Qualitative Component:** Alvarez & Marsal conducted 20 in-depth interviews with senior insurance change leaders who have successfully driven transformation and insurtech partnerships. Interviews covered prioritization practices, team structures, governance approaches, funding mechanisms, and scaling experiences.

**Analysis:** Alvarez & Marsal analyzed the combined survey and interview data to identify structural patterns that consistently differentiate successful execution from stalled initiatives. The five execution barriers and six-stage lifecycle emerged from this integrated analysis. The report’s findings on cross-boundary leadership and partnership execution are further supported by independent third-party research and sources cited throughout the report.

## Call to Action

**The insurers that will win in the next decade will not be those that pilot the most technologies, but those that build the operating muscle to prioritize clearly, decide objectively, and scale with ownership. Execution is no longer a back-office capability. It is a competitive advantage.**



### Your Next 48 Hours



**1. Complete the Maturity Self-Assessment**

(Appendix A) with your executive team. Identify which execution barrier is most acute in your organization today.



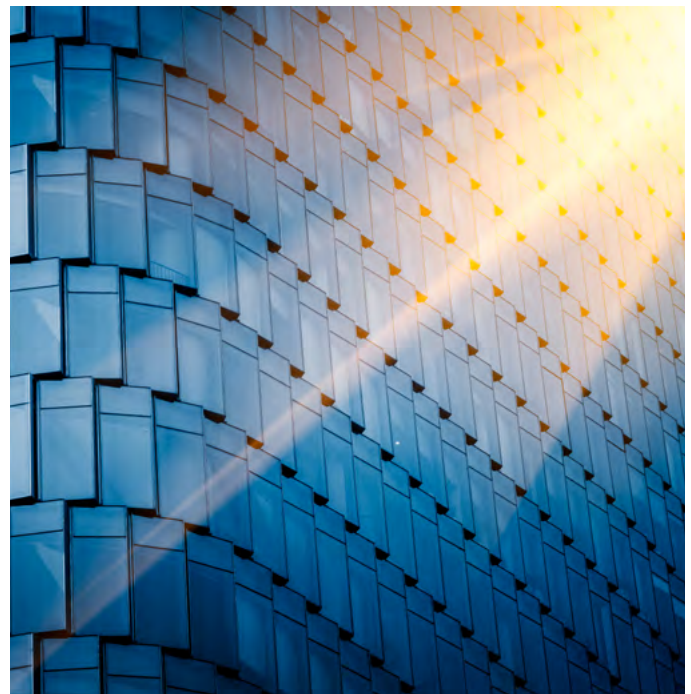
**2. Name your single highest-value stalled initiative**

Apply the six-stage diagnostic to identify exactly where it is stuck and why.



**3. Assign an owner for the 100-Day Readiness Plan**

The COO or Chief Transformation Officer is the natural sponsor. Brief them on the plan and set a kickoff date within two weeks.



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