

Leading through pressure: The C-suite turnaround mindset



In today's world, the challenge for leaders extends beyond responding to crises; it is about managing ongoing pressure before it transforms into one. Sustained high interest rates and cost inflation, tightening liquidity, and continued geopolitical uncertainty are placing pressure on performance, cash flow, and funding structures across organizations. These are not necessarily sudden shocks, but cumulative pressures that, if not addressed early, can escalate quickly and limit short to medium-term strategic options.

In these circumstances, leadership can be defined by the ability to act early and with discipline, stabilizing margins and cash flow, prioritizing effectively, and maintaining control while continuing to operate the business. Organizations that move decisively are able to preserve value and achieve

momentum when markets stabilize, while those that delay often face more disruptive outcomes and prolonged uncertainty.

This perspective draws on experience from successful turnarounds, highlighting what the turnaround mindset looks like in practice—focusing on the actions, governance, and mindset required to navigate sustained pressure and drive execution with confidence.

What the turnaround mindset looks like: The 5 pillars

A turnaround mindset exhibits a focused set of leadership priorities that enable organizations to act with clarity and discipline. In practice, five key pillars consistently differentiate organizations that stabilize early and build momentum from those that struggle to respond effectively:

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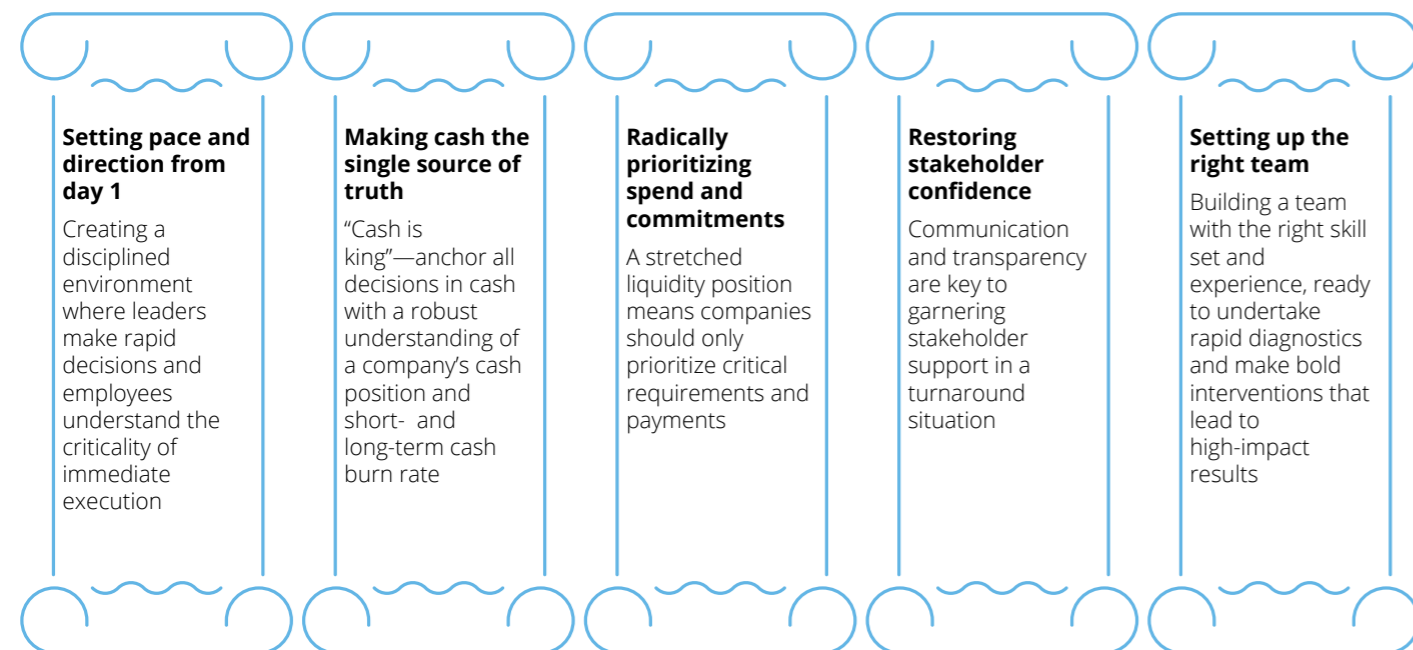


Figure 1: The 5 pillars of a turnaround mindset

From turnaround mindset to action: The first 90 days

Execution is where a turnaround succeeds or fails. The first 90 days are critical to stabilize the business, align stakeholders, and build momentum.

Phases	0 – 30 days	31 – 60 days	61 – 90 days
<p>1 Stabilize</p> <p>Gain control of cash and visibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapidly assess the financial position and cash burn rate of the company • Immediately set up a cash management office and prioritize only critical payments • Conduct a rapid diagnostic of the business levers • Establish clear communication channels with key stakeholders 		
<p>2 Align</p> <p>Agree on the path forward and secure buy-in</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantify the ROI and savings of proposed solutions and initiatives • Align with the board and other stakeholders on the way forward • Communicate the plan of action and get employees onboard 	
<p>3 Execute</p> <p>Deliver early wins and demonstrate traction</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver quick wins to build momentum • Conduct further deep-dive diagnostics • Continuously reassess plan of action ➔

Recommended KPIs for the first 90 days

- **Cash vs. plan:** Tracking actual cash performance against forecasts to ensure control and early visibility of gaps
- **Liquidity runway:** Number of weeks/months of available cash under current base and stressed scenarios

- **Cash conversion speed:** Effectiveness of converting revenue into cash (i.e. receivables, payables, inventory cycles)
- **Operational KPIs:** Core performance indicators aligned with business drivers (i.e. volume, margin, utilization)
- **Planned vs. actual savings:** Tracking delivery of cost reduction initiatives against committed targets

Early turnaround success depends on maintaining visibility over cash, liquidity, operational performance, and the delivery of cost-saving initiatives

The turnaround mindset: Organizational and behavioral considerations

A turnaround is not only operational; it also requires a shift in behavior, communication, and leadership approach across the organization.

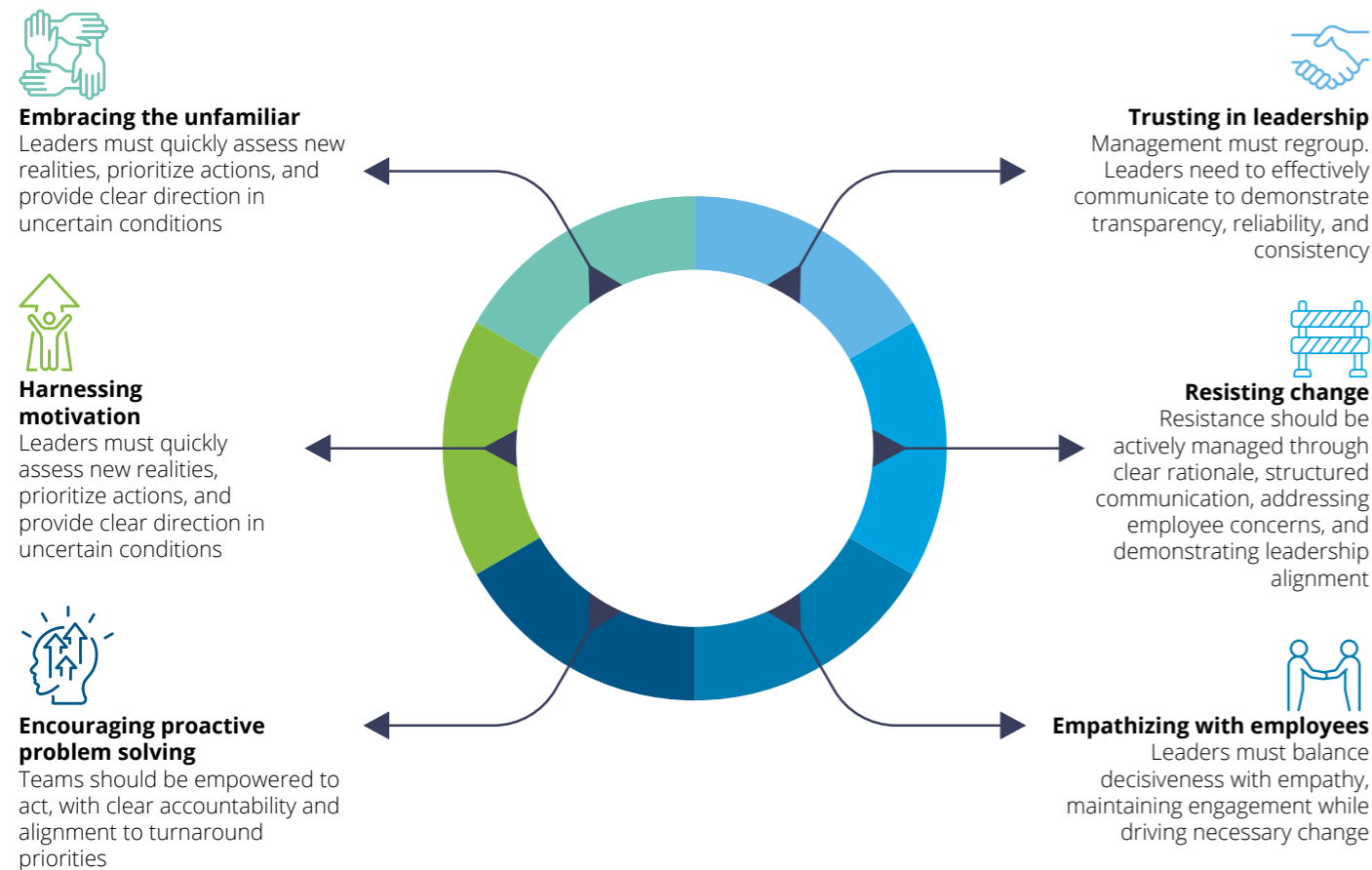


Figure 2: Organizational and behavioral considerations

Enabling execution: The Turnaround Office

Effective turnaround execution requires a dedicated structure with clear accountability, rapid decision-making, and strong governance. Leaders must be supported by a team of skilled, experienced, and reliable individuals. A Turnaround Office provides the cross department coordination, visibility, and control needed to drive the pace, align stakeholders, and ensure delivery against priorities. Rapid decisions and approvals from the board will also help expedite the turnaround process.

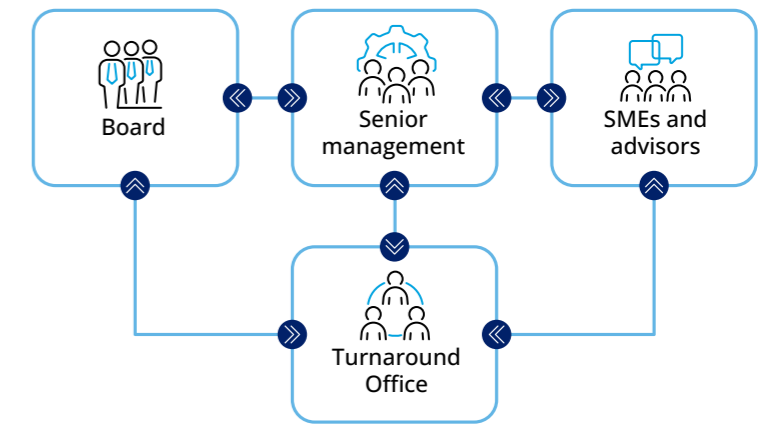


Figure 3: Recommended structure for turnaround execution

Without structure, even well-defined turnaround plans risk delay, misalignment, and failure to deliver impact. Turnaround, financial advisory, and operational expertise can help organizations stabilize, execute, and deliver value through complex turnaround situations. However, successful outcomes ultimately depend on leaders who actively and consistently champion a turnaround mindset throughout the organization.

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