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Operations Excellence

A Framework for Transformation

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This white paper is intended for informational purposes. CE3 Solutions, LLC partners with executive teams across industries to accelerate operational transformation.

Executive Summary

Operations Excellence is a defining competitive differentiator — and achieving it requires more than process improvement. It demands the right organizational foundation, a culture of sustained intensity, end-to-end thinking, and — increasingly — the strategic deployment of artificial intelligence and intelligent automation.

CE3 Solutions helps clients Optimize Service and Operations for their unique situation and marketplace. Our partners are seasoned senior leaders who have driven large-scale transformations across multiple industries. We work as trusted advisors — accelerating results, ensuring knowledge transfer, and building client sustainability into every engagement.

This paper presents eight high-leverage concepts — from Organization Design and RACI clarity through AI and Intelligent Automation — that consistently deliver strong ROI with manageable risk. Applied in the right sequence, they form the foundation of a durable, transformational roadmap.

✓ **Key Finding:** *Organization Design and RACI are the most overlooked — and highest-leverage — starting points for transformation.*

✓ **Key Finding:** *AI is no longer a future consideration — it is a present-day competitive differentiator across operations, forecasting, and customer experience.*

✓ **Key Finding:** *Reducing “bad demand” and eliminating rework factories consistently delivers high ROI — improving both cost and customer experience simultaneously.*

Strategic Context

To help our clients differentiate themselves from their competitors, a major focus is on developing the disciplines necessary to achieve Operations Excellence. Together with Service, these two business functions are key to delivering on the client’s brand promise. CE3 Solutions helps our clients Optimize Service and Operations for their situation and marketplace.

There are several approaches to driving Operations Excellence. Generally, a client firm chooses goals relative to its competitors: do you want to be the low-cost provider, the best at service quality, the most flexible in handling changes and challenges? Or all of the above? In addition, a client needs a leadership model and culture that foster high achievement, continuous improvement, and engaged employees. Sustained intensity remains a critical success factor.

Operations vary by industry, so CE3 Solutions does not offer a one-size-fits-all template. As your trusted partner, we work with your firm to identify unique opportunities, consider sequencing for adoption, and

build a transformational road map. Creating an organization with a reputation for Operations Excellence requires disciplines in organizational design, process improvement, employee empowerment, culture creation and leadership, reduction of rework and bad demand, operations risk, and end-to-end partner collaboration. It also requires sourcing opportunity assessment and vendor management best practices.

CE3 Solutions' partners have these experiences and have been senior leaders in large organizations driving service and operations transformations throughout our careers. We work with large and medium-size businesses as trusted advisors. Our experience allows us to accelerate our clients' efforts and ensure that knowledge transfer and client sustainability are built into every engagement.

Eight High-Leverage Concepts

While each firm will have its own detailed plan for its unique situation, based on our experience there are some general concepts that can be applied with high reward and a low degree of difficulty and cost. Often they are necessary to maximize any transformation. They can have high leverage and unleash an empowering focus that is easily transferred to the entire organization. In general order they are:

1. Organization Design

This step includes the organization design, role clarity, and talent capable of delivering innovative and continuous improvement. This is a critical success factor often overlooked. It can happen fast and often results in management cost savings.

- There are several alternative concepts to consider. What has been the organization structure in recent years? If it is switched up, can a firm generate new energy and faster execution? In several situations we have shifted from being geographically organized to a national or global process structure.
- Being process-structured leads to faster standardization of processes, consolidation of sites, business continuity, automation, leaning, and reengineering.
- A process organization can be nimbler. It can determine if a process can be outsourced, modified to follow the sun, or have work directed to best performers or underutilized sites.
- If your company is a product of mergers and acquisitions, chances are high that the back and middle offices have not truly been integrated. A process-based organization can take on the consolidation challenge more effectively than geographically based silos.
- In today's hybrid and distributed work environment, org design must also account for geographic flexibility, virtual team structures, and the management disciplines needed to maintain culture and accountability across remote teams.

2. RACI

Related to organization design is establishing the relationships between all groups and how transformation work gets done effectively. Determine for all key organizational goals who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. Are leaders' individual goals linked to each other appropriately to ensure

constructive teamwork? Confusion can delay decisions, blur accountability, and generally slow improvement efforts.

3. Create a Culture of Sustained Intensity on Performance

A zero-defects mentality can be brought to life by routines that highlight and require follow-up on deficient Key Process Indicators. Management teams can convene briefly each morning to review prior-day KPIs, increasingly surfaced through real-time dashboards and digital reporting tools. The leader must have authority, command respect, and apply discipline consistently. When KPIs fall outside set control limits, the responsible manager is required to submit a written follow-up summarizing the problem, root cause, and prevention of recurrence. Selected reports are then discussed by the team, led by the accountable manager.

4. Measurements — Measure What Matters

Beware of metrics that reward unintended behavior. The emergence of real-time analytics, AI-assisted dashboards, and predictive KPIs has expanded what is measurable — and what can be acted upon in near real-time. New metrics around digital adoption, automation effectiveness, and AI model performance are increasingly important. Often there is a new, perhaps currently unmeasured, metric that if adopted can accelerate improvement. This may lead to resurrecting improvement ideas that were ahead of their time, creating new energy and driving both cost reduction and service improvement.

Key Insight: *The shift from lagging indicators to predictive KPIs — powered by AI-assisted dashboards — enables leaders to act on emerging issues before they become performance failures. This is one of the most immediate ROI opportunities in modern operations management.*

5. Constructive Pressure — Challenging the Status Quo

Constructive tension can be generated by having Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs).

- An example of an effective BHAG: challenge cycle times to become a fraction of their current duration. (Example: Reduce a process from 8 hours to 8 minutes.) This drives automation and lean reengineering — improving the customer experience while reducing cost and improving accuracy.
- In 2026, a powerful BHAG might be: automate 70% of a target manual process within 90 days using intelligent automation.
- Consider how you would reduce costs by 50% in three months with an unlimited technology investment. If your team takes the challenge seriously, they will generate more aggressive ideas than during a normal annual budget cycle. “Constructive” tension is a great lever.

6. Think End-to-End in Your Process Assessment

Often an upstream process does not understand how its errors generate downstream costs through rework and correction. Identify rework factories and eliminate them by reengineering upstream processes and providing individual feedback wherever possible. Digital process mining tools can now map actual process flows — including exceptions and workarounds — providing a data-driven view of where rework concentrates and what upstream changes will have the greatest impact. It is always cheaper to prevent an error than to correct it.

7. Workload Forecasting and Planning

Multifaceted improvements in this process can yield short-term and intermediate-term benefits. Machine learning models now deliver significantly more accurate workload forecasts, dynamically adjusting for seasonality, events, and emerging trends. Raise the standards on forecast accuracy, shift staffing to match the improved forecast, identify opportunities to accelerate work availability, and systematically distinguish good demand from bad demand.

Bad demand is preventable — driven by errors, lack of information, or poor customer experiences upstream. Reducing bad demand delivers a high ROI by simultaneously cutting costs and improving the customer experience. AI-powered contact center tools — including intelligent self-service and virtual agents — have dramatically expanded the ability to reduce bad demand at scale.

8. AI and Intelligent Automation

The rapid maturation of artificial intelligence has created a step-change opportunity for Operations Excellence. AI is no longer a future consideration — it is a present-day competitive differentiator. CE3 Solutions helps clients assess, prioritize, and implement AI opportunities across their operations, including:

Intelligent Process Automation (IPA)

Combining robotic process automation with AI to handle complex, judgment-intensive tasks that traditional automation cannot address — reducing cost, improving accuracy, and freeing your workforce for higher-value work.

Generative AI in Operations

Deploying large language model-based tools to accelerate knowledge work, draft communications, summarize complex information, and support agent-assisted customer interactions.

AI-Powered Decision Support

Embedding predictive and prescriptive analytics into operational workflows so managers receive real-time guidance — not just historical reporting.

AI Governance and Risk

Establishing the oversight frameworks, data quality standards, and human-in-the-loop controls necessary to deploy AI responsibly and sustainably.

Workforce Transformation

Helping teams understand how their roles will evolve in an AI-enabled environment, and building the skills and mindsets needed to embrace — rather than resist — the change.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the analysis in this white paper, CE3 Solutions recommends the following priorities for leadership teams:

- **Start with org design and RACI.** Without the right organizational foundation, larger transformation efforts are at risk or delayed. These are fast to implement and often yield immediate management cost savings.
- **Establish a daily KPI cadence.** Deploy real-time dashboards and a zero-defects accountability routine to create sustained intensity and measurable progress toward goals.
- **Set a BHAG around automation or cycle time reduction.** Constructive pressure unlocks ideas that incremental budget cycles never surface.
- **Map your end-to-end process flows and identify rework factories.** Use digital process mining tools to prioritize upstream fixes with the highest downstream impact.
- **Launch a structured AI opportunity assessment.** Prioritize IPA, generative AI, and AI-powered forecasting initiatives with clear governance frameworks from day one.

Conclusion

Many of the concepts above are foundational — high-leverage re-engineering or the introduction of new priorities. Often these opportunities are missed by insiders, and without the right organizational foundation the larger transformation can be at risk or delayed. A fresh, seasoned advisor can spot these dysfunctions and opportunities quickly. This is a central part of CE3 Solutions' value to our clients.

Our assessment cycle time will be fast because of our extensive experience in diverse roles, at leading companies, with complex challenges across multiple industries — including today's rapidly evolving AI-driven operations landscape. Companies that act decisively on these eight levers will build durable competitive advantage; those that wait risk falling further behind as competitors embrace both structural discipline and intelligent automation.

We would welcome the opportunity to understand your challenges and help accelerate your transformation to a company that is Operationally Excellent.



About CE3 Solutions

John Quinn — Chief Executive Officer and Partner

John Quinn is CEO and Partner with CE3 Solutions, LLC, a boutique management consulting firm specializing in creation and implementation of strategic and tactical roadmaps for businesses to simultaneously improve their customer experience, shareholder/business value, employee engagement, and risk management. CE3 Solutions partners have collectively over 100 years of experience in directly managing these areas with numerous Fortune 500 organizations, while also providing solutions to businesses of all sizes.

CE3 Solutions, LLC is a boutique management consulting firm specializing in operational risk, operational optimization, customer experience strategies, global outsourcing, human resources, and logistics. We partner with executive teams to build and execute transformational roadmaps that deliver measurable results. Learn more at www.ce3solutions.net.