

# Culture Turnaround and HR Transformation for Global Expansion

A people and HR transformation that moved a founder-led communications technology company from destructive engagement, rising attrition, and absent processes to a scalable operating model supporting international growth and ISO readiness.

ANONYMOUS CLIENT	SCALE	GEOGRAPHY	MY ROLE
Communications technology company providing AI-driven solutions for enterprises and mobile operators	International, mid-size, 300+ people, 8-figure revenue, USD.	CIS, Europe, UK, South Asia	Chief HR & Admin Officer reporting to founders and executive leadership

I was brought in with an explicit request from the founders: transform the company from a local, founder-led, chaotic culture into an internationally scaling organization with professional HR practices and a world-class leadership team.

The business was growing quickly, but the people system had not caught up: engagement was in a destructive zone, turnover was increasing, HR leadership had been unstable, and basic people processes were either missing or inconsistent. The work had to create structure without slowing the business down.

## The Transformation System

<b>01</b> Culture Turnaround & People Function Rebuild	<b>02</b> People Architecture: Values, Competency, Performance & Rewards System	<b>03</b> Global Expansion, Leadership Hiring & ISO Readiness
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## Culture Turnaround & People Function Rebuild

### CHALLENGE

The company was scaling from a local founder-led business into an international organization, but the culture and people function were breaking under the pressure. Employee engagement was at 32, turnover had reached 45%, and the company had gone through four HR Directors in two years. People practices were inconsistent, internal trust was low, and the employer reputation was weakening while the business needed stronger talent and more mature leadership practices.

### SOLUTION

- Stabilized the HR function by establishing clear role ownership across the full employee lifecycle, ending the revolving door of HR leadership and creating continuity for the first time.
- Redesigned all HR and TA roles; introduced new roles where coverage was absent; aligned the compensation structure to reflect the new design and expectations.
- Introduced KPIs for the Talent Operations team, replacing informal, unmeasured activity with accountable performance standards and aligned compensation structure.
- Designed a values and competency model and embedded it into recruitment, performance review, promotion decisions, learning, and internal communications, so that culture was no longer treated as messaging but as an operating system for people decisions.
- Introduced eNPS as a real-time measurement of employee sentiment, establishing a baseline and tracking improvement throughout the transformation.

### BUSINESS RESULT

<p><b>32 → 56</b> Employee engagement index in 18 months</p>	<p><b>45% → 22%</b> Turnover reduced</p>	<p><b>43</b> eNPS introduced and achieved</p>	<p><b>4 → 1</b> HR leadership instability replaced by accountable ownership</p>
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The people function moved from reactive administration to structured ownership of the employee lifecycle. Engagement improved materially, turnover dropped by more than half, and the company gained a common language for values, behavior, and leadership expectations. The HR and TA teams were repositioned from fragmented support functions into a more accountable Talent Operations system supporting growth.

### WHAT CHANGED

The HR function transformed from a repeatedly failed leadership position into a stable, structured operation with clear ownership and measurable performance. More fundamentally, the signal to the organization changed: people practices were designed, visible, and applied. Culture became measurable, discussable, and connected to everyday talent decisions. That shift in signal was the precondition for everything else.

## People Architecture: Values, Competency, Performance & Reward System

### CHALLENGE

Rapid headcount growth exposed gaps across the employee lifecycle. Recruitment, onboarding, probation, performance management, promotions, compensation, and learning were not consistently connected. Only 55% of employees successfully passed the trial period, and people decisions were not yet grounded in a coherent view of performance, potential, business contribution, and development needs.

The company's expansion into new geographies made this more urgent: without a codified framework, growth would replicate the dysfunction at scale, creating fragmented team cultures across regions that would be impossible to align or manage.

### SOLUTION

- Designed, refined, and formalized employee lifecycle processes with checklists, templates, reports, and decision rules.
- Designed the company's Values and Competency model defining the behavioral and professional standards the organization expected at every level.
- Integrated the model fully across the employee lifecycle: into recruitment criteria, performance evaluation, promotion decisions, L&D planning, and internal communications, ensuring it shaped real and aligned decisions.
- Connected performance results and potential assessments to salary increases, promotions, and development planning, replacing ad hoc decisions with a transparent, merit-based framework.
- Introduced C&B packages that reflected role level, performance, and market benchmarks, replacing the informal, founder-discretion compensation model.

### BUSINESS RESULT

<b>55%→89%</b> Employees passing trial period	<b>180 → 300+</b> Headcount growth in 18 months	<b>0→Full</b> Employee lifecycle process coverage	<b>C&amp;B</b> Compensation and benefits packages introduced
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The company gained a more predictable and transparent talent operating model. Hiring quality improved, probation outcomes strengthened, and performance and potential data became usable for promotion, compensation, and development decisions. Managers received clearer rules, employees received more consistent treatment, and the HR team gained the process backbone needed to support scale.

### WHAT CHANGED

The company moved from a culture defined by founder instinct and inconsistent personal judgment to one with a documented value system, transparent performance standards, and a compensation model that employees could understand and trust. For many people in the organization, this was the first time they had worked somewhere with clear rules that applied equally, and that shift was felt.

## Global Expansion, Leadership Hiring & ISO 27001 Readiness

### CHALLENGE

The company needed to prepare for expansion into two new regions while also passing its first ISO 27001 certification. Achieving certification was both a compliance milestone and a commercial one: access to enterprise clients and regulated markets required it. This required stronger process discipline, clearer documentation, and a more international leadership team.

HR had to support growth across multiple geographies while meeting compliance expectations and helping the founders move the company toward a more professional management model.

### SOLUTION

- Formalized HR and employee lifecycle processes with ISO-ready documentation, checklists, templates, and reporting.
- Prepared the people organization for the certification audit across functions, identifying and closing compliance gaps, and ensuring every relevant process could be demonstrated clearly to auditors.
- Introduced and hired three new C-level roles required for the transition to international operating standards: COO, CPO, and Country Managers for newly established regions.
- Strengthened HR and TA capabilities to support hiring, onboarding, and people operations across a broader international footprint.

### BUSINESS RESULT

<b>ISO 27001</b> Passed from first presentation	<b>0</b> Auditor comments	<b>3</b> New C-level roles introduced and hired	<b>2</b> new regions scaled using formalized process infrastructure
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The company passed ISO 27001 on its first ever attempt, with zero auditor comments: an outcome that requires both the quality of the process design and the discipline of the preparation to achieve simultaneously.

Full process formalization created the operational backbone the company needed to scale across geographies without recreating procedures from scratch in each location. New regions were onboarded using documented, transferable systems rather than tribal knowledge.

### WHAT CHANGED

The organization moved from people operations that existed informally in individuals' heads to a fully documented, audit-ready HR function with standardized processes across every stage of the employee lifecycle. The company became better prepared to hire and operate internationally, pass external audits, and support a more mature executive structure.

## What This Work Created

Together, these workstreams rebuilt the company's people operating backbone. The transformation changed culture, reduced attrition, improved hiring outcomes, connected people decisions to values and performance, supported international expansion, and created the HR process discipline required for ISO certification and continued scale.

The numbers moved decisively. More importantly, the organization became a different kind of place to work.

### Business Impact

The integrated business effect of the transformation streams

- **Employee engagement: 32 → 56:** out of the destruction zone in 18 months
- **Annual turnover reduced in half:** 45% → 22%, and continuing to decline
- **4 failed HRDs in 2 years → stable HR leadership** for 18+ months
- **ISO 27001 passed first attempt**, zero auditor comments
- **Headcount: 180 → 300+** in 1.5 years;
- **Trial pass rate improved:** 55% → 89%
- **eNPS 43 established from zero**
- **International C-suite built:** COO, CPO, and Country Managers hired

### WHAT CHANGED

The company entered this engagement as a locally-minded, founder-controlled organization with a broken people function, a toxic employer reputation, and metrics that signaled acute cultural distress. It emerged as an internationally operating business with a professional HR infrastructure, a stable and growing leadership team, a documented value system, and a workforce that had grown by 70% — with engagement and retention moving in the right direction for the first time in years. The transformation delivered what was asked: a different company.