

Is Your M&A Integration Off Track? A 7-Point CFO Gut Check



When an M&A deal closes, most CFOs brace for a heavy lift. But what often catches leadership off guard isn't the complexity—it's the **disorientation**.

Close processes slow. Key hires leave. Data becomes unreliable. Financial statements require too much explaining. The question creeps in: **"Is this just turbulence—or are we actually off course?"**

Here's a quick gut check. Based on years of leading complex integrations, these seven questions help CFOs identify warning signs early—and course-correct fast.

1. Have you aligned reporting calendars, thresholds, and approval flows?

Unaligned calendars, thresholds, or close processes can turn every reporting cycle into a scramble. High-performing teams synchronize approval flows, define materiality thresholds for the combined entity, and set clear expectations for monthly, quarterly, and annual cycles.

Watch for: Repeated surprises during close, inconsistent consolidation rules, and ad-hoc decision-making on adjustments.

2. Are accounting policies harmonized—or just flagged for later?

It's tempting to leave policy harmonization for "Phase 2," but this leads to inconsistencies, audit issues, and tax mismatches. Revenue recognition, inventory, depreciation, lease treatment—differences in any of these areas can materially impact reporting.

What we see that works: A phased but deliberate harmonization plan, validated with external auditors and tax advisors.

3. Is valuation driving insights—or just satisfying compliance?

Fair value exercises, goodwill, and intangibles are often rushed to meet reporting deadlines. But the assumptions behind them shape your go-forward balance sheet and performance metrics.

High performers: Engage valuation experts and auditors early, document rigorously, and use valuation as an opportunity to align stakeholders on future value creation—not just compliance.



4. Is culture being managed—or just observed?

Most CFOs recognize cultural risk—but few act on it early. Integration efforts falter when decision-making styles, communication norms, or incentives clash.

Test yourself: Has your team defined a go-forward management model? Are roles, autonomy levels, and expectations clear? Are there cross-functional efforts in place to build bridges?

5. Have you mapped critical knowledge—and what happens if it walks?

In smaller acquisitions, one person may hold all the reporting, system, or compliance knowledge. If they leave, institutional knowledge disappears.

Quick fix: Identify single points of failure. Prioritize documentation and cross-training. Consider temporary redundancy in critical roles during the transition.

6. Do your systems talk to each other—or are you bridging gaps manually?

Not all integrations require full IT unification immediately—but too many rely on spreadsheets long after close. If ERP or reporting systems remain siloed, expect persistent data mismatches and control risks.

Checkpoint: Is there a clear roadmap for systems integration? Are interim reconciliation and data governance measures in place?

7. Is FP&A forecasting reality—or legacy?

Merged entities need recalibrated forecasts. If your FP&A team is struggling to establish baselines, align assumptions, or consolidate KPIs, you may be flying blind.

Best practice: Roll out a unified planning model, adjust for synergies and costs, and communicate clearly with execs and the Board about transitional forecast accuracy.

Final Thought

Post-merger chaos is normal. But prolonged ambiguity isn't.

Use this diagnostic to spot trouble early—before reporting issues, auditor challenges, or Board frustration make the integration feel like a bad deal.

And remember: CFOs don't just sign off on integration—they **own the narrative**. Build a plan, sequence wisely, and align fast. Integration success isn't about avoiding complexity—it's about leading through it.

About Kebla

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