Balancing Control & Autonomy in Transformation Efforts
Joe Rolewicz, Partner & Managing Director
November 2025

We have seen some of our large healthcare clients face a common challenge in executing their enterprise-level transformation efforts: **How to maintain enterprise-wide alignment while empowering local teams to execute with speed and ownership?**

Leaning too far towards centralized control can slow decision-making and dampen innovation. Leaning too far toward local autonomy can lead to inconsistency, fragmented processes, and diluted results. In our experience, successful transformation leaders strike a deliberate balance—one where strategy and governance are centralized, but execution is decentralized and owned by the teams closest to the work.

Centralized Considerations – creating consistency and a single version of the "truth"

Activities that should remain at the enterprise level to ensure alignment and clarity:

- Strategic goals, OKRs, and performance metrics
- Enterprise value targets
- Reporting standards and financial tracking
- Governance, risk management, and decision escalation
- Enterprise-wide data definitions and regulatory guardrails

Decentralized Considerations – creating momentum and "fueling" ownership

Execution belongs with local leaders who understand workflows, constraints, and adoption dynamics:

- Day-to-day process redesign
- Local communication and change adoption
- Root cause identification and issue escalation
- Quick-cycle testing and iterative improvement.

Our "Guardrails + Playbooks" Approach – creating alignment without stifling flexibility

A practical operating method for large, complex organizations:

- **Guardrails:** Non-negotiables (KPIs, compliance, financial standards)
- **Playbooks:** Templates, best practices, and workflows that local teams can adapt

---

The Role of a Transformation Operating System

A well-designed transformation structure keeps both sides in balance. Typical components include:

- A **central Transformation Office (TMO)** for governance and reporting
- **Local transformation leads** embedded in markets, practices, or business units
- **Cross-functional workstreams** (clinical, digital, operations, revenue cycle)
- A regular **cadence of accountability**

The goal: organization-wide clarity, faster decisions, and consistent execution.

The Leadership Imperative

Balancing control and autonomy ultimately comes down to leadership behaviors:

- Communicate direction clearly
- Empower teams to own execution
- Remove barriers quickly
- Build trust through transparency
- Celebrate progress early and often

We have observed that the best transformation programs are not "top-down" or "bottom-up"—they are **aligned, connected, and co-led** across every level of the organization.

To learn more about how we help our payer, provider, and health system clients assess the variability in corporate vs. local requirements and execution capabilities in their transformation initiatives, visit us at www.sunstonemanagementadvisors.com.

About the Author

Joe Rolewicz is a Founding Partner of Sunstone Management Advisors, a growth advisory firm focused on helping healthcare and insurance companies identify and unlock their full enterprise value. With over 25 years of experience leading complex transformation initiatives for healthcare and insurance businesses, he leads our Transformation Consulting Practice, leveraging experiences gained from over 50 different clients as well as Senior Manager roles with national consulting practices. He is also the former SVP of Planning and Project Management for a national managed behavioral health organization. Joe received his Bachelor's of Business Administration in Finance from James Madison University and a Master's in Business Administration from Loyola University in Maryland. ***Questions or comments?*** Feel free to contact Joe directly at jrolewicz@sunstonemanagementadvisors.com or connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/josephmrolewicz