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Life after live

Serious about outcomes. Not serious about ourselves.

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The system went live.

> Go-live is the end of the project. It says so in the project plan — the final milestone, the one the Gantt chart terminates at. It is not the end of anything. It is the beginning of a different, harder problem: the problem of an organisation built around a legacy system encountering, for the first time at production volume, the system that was supposed to replace it.

The implementation did not.

1. The Mythology of Go-Live

The go-live date functions as a destination. Everything before it is a journey. The kick-off is the departure. The UAT phase is the approach. Go-live is arrival. This mythology is maintained because it is useful: it gives the project a shape, gives the steering committee something to track, gives the vendor a milestone against which payment is triggered.

Go-live day is the first day the system is used in production, at volume, by the people who were not in the UAT environment, on the data that was not in the test dataset, for the transactions that were not in the test scripts. It is the first real test of the implementation. The project plan treated it as the finish line. It is the starting gun.

2. The Hypercare Fiction

Most project plans include a hypercare phase — a period of intensified support immediately following go-live, typically two to four weeks. Hypercare ends when the project ends. The issues do not.

The issues that surface during hypercare are the obvious ones. The project team departs. Hypercare is logged as complete.

The issues that surface after hypercare are the real ones. The reporting that does not match the legacy system output. The workflow exception that occurs twice a month. The regulatory reporting failures that emerge when the first post-live reporting period closes. These are not merely operational problems. They are reportable events. They arrive after the project manager's engagement has ended.

3. The Workaround Economy

Every organisation that has been using a legacy financial system for more than five years has built a workaround economy around it. Spreadsheets that compensate for reporting limitations. Manual processes that handle transactions the system cannot. Institutional knowledge held by specific individuals.

> *The system that was built for the specification meets the organisation that has been using workarounds for eighteen months. Between them is a gap.*
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> *The gap is filled initially by people who know the old workarounds and have not yet learned the new ones. Then it is filled by new workarounds — built on top of the new system, invisible to the vendor, undocumented, dependent on the continued employment of the people who invented them.*
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> ***The system went live. The implementation did not.***

4. What Comes After Live

The post-live phase is not a support problem. It is an adoption problem, a change management problem, a configuration problem, and a data quality problem.

A post-live plan adequate to the actual challenge has five components:

One. A structured process for capturing and resolving configuration issues that only appear under production load.

Two. An adoption tracking mechanism that measures not go-live usage, but correct usage.

Three. A workaround audit conducted sixty days after go-live, identifying manual processes that have emerged around the system.

Four. A regulatory reporting validation conducted at the close of the first full reporting period post-live.

Five. A data quality review at ninety days, measuring mandate compliance, data completeness, and the accuracy of the migrated data against the source.

Plan for what comes after live.

It is longer than the project.

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