

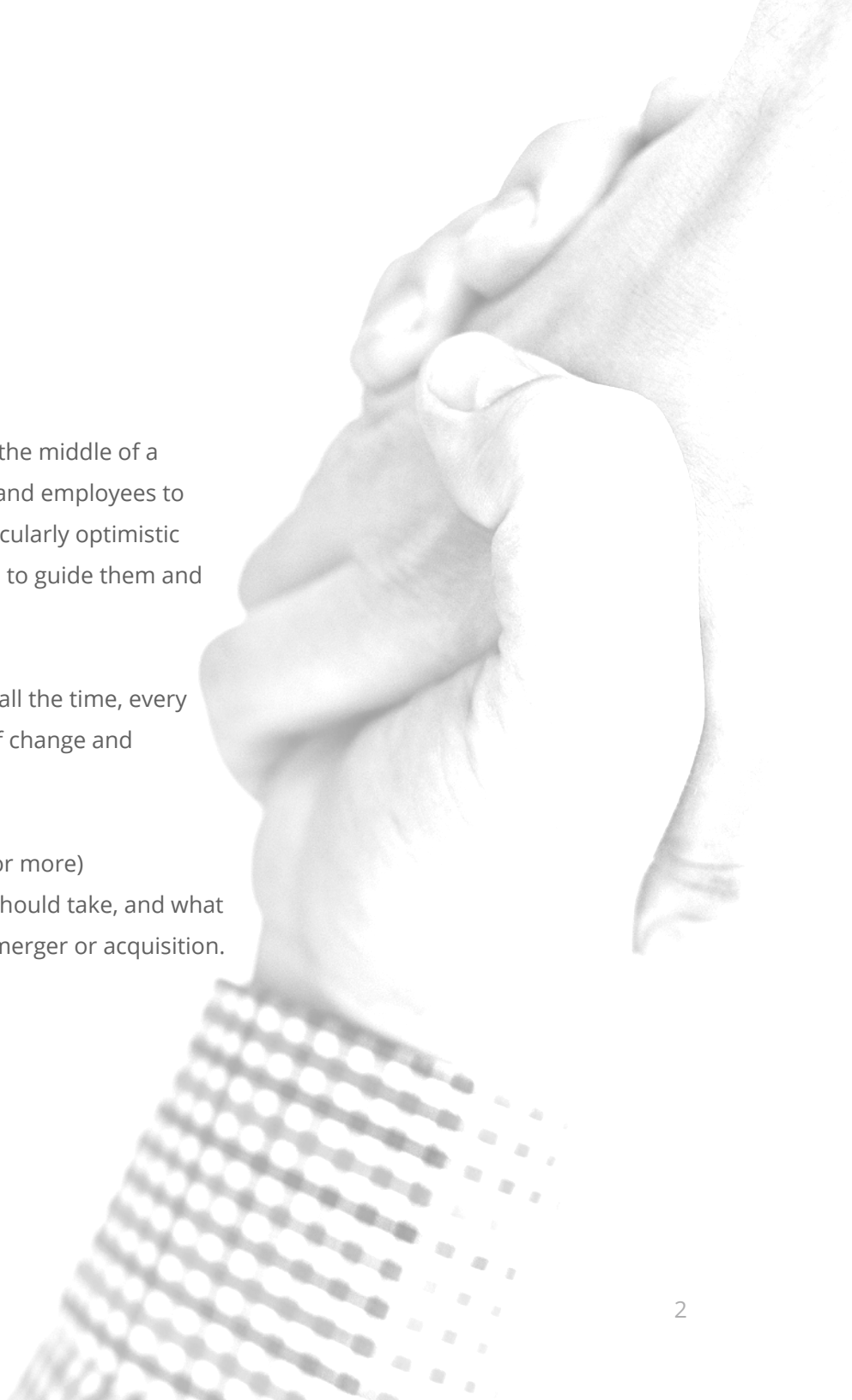


# M&A

## Merger & Acquisition Checklist

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If you have your hands on this document, it probably means that you're in the middle of a merger or an acquisition. This is a great opportunity for your organization and employees to grow and develop – and that's a great thing. Even if you're not feeling particularly optimistic about going through these big changes, your employees are relying on you to guide them and provide insight into what the future holds for them.

Unfortunately, we know that not all mergers and acquisitions go smoothly all the time, every time. With a focused learning and development strategy, however, times of change and uncertainty are easier to navigate.

Provided here is a basic checklist of the integration process between two (or more) organizations, which includes a few recommendations on what steps you should take, and what information you should seek to maximize your impact on the goals of the merger or acquisition.

# Phase 1: Pre-Integration

## THE PLANNING PHASE

In this phase, we're assuming that a sale has been completed and change is imminent, though elements of this phase often occur prior to the close.

### ☐ 1. Define Success Around the Merger or Acquisition From a Business Standpoint

This first step is important – determining the desired outcome for your merger or acquisition can help you identify which departments might be influenced by change, and where you can anticipate growth or reduction. An important role of L&D/HR is to prepare the workforce, which is why you need to know what the overall objectives are.

### ☐ 2. Affirm the Specific Change Management Plan & Goal

Make sure that your leaders have built out a specific change management plan that addresses everyone impacted by change. This is a standard practice of change management, though only about 18% of organizations do it effectively. If there isn't an explicit plan, this resource provides some insight into standard elements of an effective change management plan, and typical goals.

### ☐ 3. Talk to Your Leaders & Ask Questions

Use this time to get your questions answered. Make sure that you understand your company's change management strategy. Transparency and communication skills will be key traits of anyone trying to lead this initiative. Your leaders will likely prepare talking points for other managers – your understanding is vital to ensure you can support those managers and coach them on communicating change.

### ☐ 4. Address & Reduce Uncertainty Through Education

Here's where your training program can really shine. Work with managers to identify uncertainty – perhaps employees are stressed about impending mergers or acquisitions and need tips on how to cope, or maybe leaders are struggling to communicate and present these changes to stakeholders. Discover uncertainties and overcome them with education – which will have a massive impact on productivity!

### PRO TIP

This phase will set the tone for the entire process. Defining early on what success looks like will make achieving goals and milestones much easier.

Take this opportunity to align your training program to the objectives at-hand. Identify skills that might be helpful during this process and find internal champions for your initiative.



# Phase 2: Integration

## THE ACTION PHASE

In this phase, the actual integrations and changes will begin taking place, and your job will be to support the skills needed for those leading this change initiative. Continue reducing uncertainty and begin setting the building blocks for the new and improved organization.

### PRO TIP

Alert! Alert! Phase 2 is where things really start to happen. If you are particularly fond of a system or tool you're using, here is your opportunity to make a case for it. During mergers and acquisitions, not only jobs, but systems, policies, and procedures will get streamlined and consolidated.

With this, opportunities for improvement are put in the spotlight. If you have a recommendation – speak up!

#### ☐ 5. *Work with Leadership to Define the New Culture*

Identify cultural elements from both (or all) companies that you'd like to retain. Use these values and elements to build an intentional culture in your newly formed company. This is a great opportunity to incorporate elements of agility to solidify the idea that “change is inevitable.”

#### ☐ 6. *Identify Organizational Structures That Overlap Existing Structures*

Often, the reality during mergers and acquisitions is that there will be some redundancies. This is unfortunate for some employees, but lead with transparency and remain dedicated to fairness. Doing so will reduce the negative stigma your company will get from former employees.

#### ☐ 7. *Plan Training*

Work with leadership and management to identify the skills that will reinforce the culture of your newly formed organization. This could be for executives, managers, or individual employees.

#### ☐ 8. *Train for New Processes*

As new processes and systems are introduced to your organization, make sure that employees are fully trained on these new systems and software.

#### ☐ 9. *Encourage Employees to Build Skills for Roles They Want*

Change is a great opportunity not just for L&D, but for every employee. As skill gaps will inevitably get uncovered, encourage employees to develop their skills for roles they may seek in the future. As new openings and opportunities appear, having skills needed for those roles will come in handy.

# Phase 3: Post-Integration

## SUSTAINING CHANGE

At this point, your company is in a position to handle incoming challenges as a singular unit. This last phase focuses on evaluation – if there’s one lesson you’ve learned from this process, it should be that your organization needs to be ready to handle change!

☐ **10. Evaluate Your Merger or Acquisition by Measuring Success**

Remember step one? Evaluate your performance against the goals you initially set. It’s normal for goals and outlooks to change, so keep that in mind as you evaluate your success.

☐ **11. Adapt Your Change Management Plans Based on Your Findings**

Work with leadership to discuss how your plan succeeded, and what needs adjustment. A great place to start is to examine employee retention, productivity, and employee engagement through the phases.

☐ **12. Identify the Biggest At-Risk Departments**

You want to identify and mitigate two major risks-regressions to old ways, and increased employee turnovers. Departments that struggled during the change process will likely struggle in the future. Work with department managers to solidify changes and reduce uncertainty.

☐ **13. Celebrate!**

Now, you have more resources than ever to help you train and develop a larger workforce. Not all mergers go successfully, so it’s great to revisit the steps on this list to make sure that you’ve accomplished everything you need to! With L&D working as a truly strategic arm of the business, you can help lead a successful merger.

### PRO TIP

You came, you saw, you conquered. Great job! You really proved yourself during this process – right? OK, well maybe not everything went 100% according to plan, but can you imagine if you had no plan at all? The horror!

Did you meet the goals you set? What would you change next time? Take some time during this phase to reflect on your actions and refine your change management plan just in case you need it again. Also, report to the leadership team what went really well. They’ll want to know what role training and development played during this time.