

Transitional change management in pharma – managing post M&A operations



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The pharmaceutical industry is no stranger to change. With mergers and acquisitions (M&A) surging year after year, organizations are often faced with the monumental task of integrating new sites, people, systems, and portfolios into their existing operations. **Post-M&A success isn't simply about acquiring assets** – it's about ensuring that those assets are efficiently and compliantly brought into the organization with minimal disruption.

Change management plays a pivotal role in this transition. Unlike other sectors, pharmaceutical integrations are deeply complex due to strict regulatory demands, serialization requirements, and high-risk operational environments. Without a structured approach, companies risk operational inefficiencies, regulatory penalties, and talent attrition.

This e-book outlines a five-pillar approach to managing post-M&A transformation in pharma. Built on real-world experience, the methodology guides you through the most critical aspects: processes, people, technology, data, and commercial models.

Streamline Processes for Seamless Integration

The first step to effective integration is understanding and mapping all existing and incoming workflows. Whether you're merging SOPs, onboarding new suppliers, or synchronizing quality systems, the goal is a streamlined, harmonized operation.

Case Example: When two internal manufacturing sites were converted into CMOs, success depended on remapping their operations, restructuring process ownership, and re-documenting responsibilities. This transformation required coordinated audits, training, and alignment with external client expectations.

Engage and support people

Processes mean nothing without the people behind them. In post-M&A environments, emotional, cultural, and structural disruption is inevitable. Managing the human side of change is essential.

- **Cultural integration:** address differences in decision-making styles, hierarchy, and communication norms
- **Leadership visibility:** ensure executives lead by example and are involved in key communications
- **Clear roles and responsibilities:** define and share updated organizational structures

Support mechanisms such as regular town halls, feedback surveys, and role-specific workshops help teams adjust. Resistance can be transformed into buy-in when people understand the 'why' behind the change and are given a voice in shaping it.

Leverage technology for operational success

- **System assessments:** audit existing systems across both entities for overlap and critical functionality
- **Training and onboarding:** role-based training is essential for adoption
- **Tech transition planning:** phased shutdown of legacy platforms ensures continuity

Serialization systems, ERP integrations, LIMS, and document control platforms must be validated and updated in accordance with business changes. New user access models, support structures, and IT governance policies should be introduced early.

Manage data effectively

- **Ownership and access:** clearly define who owns what data and how it will be controlled
- **Serialization and regulatory data:** ensure historical data, audit trails, and MATs (Marketing Authorization Transfers) are transferred and reconciled
- **GxP compliance:** all data transfer processes must be validated under GAMP 5 principles

Avoiding data loss, misalignment, or duplication is key. Serialization master data, batch histories, and regulatory documents must transition smoothly to avoid supply chain disruptions.