



EVERGREEN PREMORTEMS, TO AVOID POSTMORTEMS

AI, as one of the five structural changes now occurring, is tipping the scale with its reaction speed and accuracy/inaccuracy issues, resulting in organizations not having as much time or certainty about many key factors in their growth or risk strategies.

Previously, executives would base their future growth plans on deep-dive research development, prototypes, etc., then do postmortem analysis on what failed. The speed of change is increasing: *“Pressures on organizations are no longer sequential, but compounding. Technological advancement is converging with economic volatility, geopolitical tensions, societal expectations, and a rapidly shifting workforce. The boundary between planning and execution is collapsing, even as cost pressures, efficiency mandates, and questions of trust and clarity intensify.”*¹ More than 57% of CEOs worry they’re not adapting fast enough to stay ahead of disruption; 94% of executives say their business models need to change in the next three years.

Given that 50% of CEOs have already made two or more business model transformations in the last five years² AND that only 12% of business model transformations produced lasting impacts (a statistic that hasn’t changed in 20 years!?!)³, this article suggests a different tactic that also captures a solution to AI’s speeding up of reaction time dilemma. The steps are the following:

1. Always be in a evergreen state of transformation as it’s more well-suited to today’s fast changing, dynamic⁴ environment.
2. Craft an agenda of all the most critical issues of all types that the organization is facing AND what are the desired changes.
3. Start with the most important and/or the easiest to achieve issues/changes, with never any group/area having to alter more than one routine/process at a time; pre-defined key success indicators determined in advance; and fixed rewards also determined in advance for across the process for attaining each level of completion.
4. Rather than starting the strategy planning sessions to achieve these issues/changes/goals, start with the strategy planning sessions with attendees purposefully imagining that the issue/change/goal has failed. The group’s goal then is to conduct a premortem on what caused the failure...and how each of those possible failures could have been avoided.⁵ Best practices:
 - a. Use teams of two that include outside experts and inside Subject Matter Experts from each of the important departments to the issue/change: e.g., Finance, Engineering, Operations, etc. PLUS someone familiar with 5 Whys, Heuristics/Bias ID, etc.; and someone to be Overall Devil’s Advocate (someone from Risk is usually good).
 - b. Have each team evaluate pros/cons of the issue/change independently under 3 scenarios: if issue/change is enacted as proposed; if the issue/change isn’t done; the alternatives to doing/not doing issue/change (i.e., the range of options).
 - c. All teams write up their separate paper detailing their process and conclusions and share with other teams.
 - d. One more joint evaluation meeting with enough time for reflection: this last meeting summarizes Premortem’s recommendations to Executive team as to best next steps to incorporate into the transformative issue/change.
5. The following diagram shows the six steps to this process, which also align with these evergreen premortem steps.

1. Treat transformation as continuous process; when one issue/change completed; replace it with another one.	3. Build it at the company's operating rhythm; limit disruptions and prevent widespread organizational fatigue.	5. Explicitly manage organizational energy by rewarding/measuring success, promoting those who achieve.
2. Use aspirations, not targets, to set choice of desired changes/issues.	4. Drive change from the middle out with SME/outside, then back to execs.	6. Access substantial external capital from start to defuse budget battles. ³

Research has proven that premortems reduce executives’ overconfidence⁶ and other success-killers such as corporate politics, individual incentives, and human biases⁷, plus they’re fast and can be as formal or informal as needed. Using evergreen premortems avoids late stage, dead-on-arrival postmortems, which no one has any time left to deal with anymore.

References

¹Poynton, S. et al. (March 4, 2026). *2026 Global Human Capital Trends*. Deloitte Insights. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/human-capital-trends.html>

²Peregrine, M. (October 13, 2025). *NACD Casts a Renewed Focus On The Board-CEO Relationship*. Forbes Media LLC. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelperegrine/2025/10/13/nacd-casts-a-renewed-focus-on-the-board-ceo-relationship/>

³Mankins, M., & Litre, M. (May-June, 2024). *Organizational Transformation: Transformations that Work*. Harvard Business Review.

⁴This vs. That. (2026). *Dynamic vs. Fast-Paced – What’s the Difference?* <https://thisvsthat.io/dynamic-vs-fast-paced>

⁵Martins, J. (July 3, 2025). *Premortem: How to run a project pre-mortem meeting*. Asana. <https://asana.com/resources/premortem>

⁶Klein, G. et al. (March 2019). *Premortems: Being smart at the start*. McKinsey & Company.

⁷Bradley, C. et al. (February 2018). *Strategy to beat the odds*. McKinsey Quarterly.