

The High Cost of Waiting

Last quarter I spoke with the founder of a thirty-person SaaS company. Good product, paying customers, a sales team hitting their number most quarters. He'd been thinking about bringing in a revenue operations consultant for about eight months.

"We're almost at the point where it makes sense."

I hear this a lot. And I understand the hesitation. Bringing in outside strategic help can feel like an admission that you've hit a wall and can't figure it out internally. So founders wait until the problem is undeniable. Until the pain is loud enough that spending money on it feels absolutely justified.

What they don't account for is what the waiting costs.

Almost ready

Let's stay with this founder for a moment. Eight months of running a sub-optimal revenue operations setup: misaligned handoffs between marketing and sales, reporting that didn't surface the right signals, a comp structure quietly incentivising the wrong behaviours. None of it catastrophic. All of it dragging on growth, incrementally, every month.

He had the data. CAC was creeping up. Expansion revenue wasn't materialising at the rate the model predicted. His best sales rep had left six months earlier and he still wasn't sure why. None of this was mysterious. A revenue operations expert would have named these problems, and started fixing them, within the first few weeks.

Eight months of compounding friction. The problem was real enough. It just wasn't yet loud enough to justify the spend.

I see this pattern repeat with growth-stage founders more than almost anything else. The gap between "we probably need this" and "we definitely need this" is where a significant amount of value quietly disappears.

Why the threshold keeps moving

Part of what makes this sticky is that the threshold moves with the company. At fifteen people, you tell yourself you'll get strategic help at twenty-five. At twenty-five, it's forty. At forty, you're building out the leadership team and planning to bring in external expertise once things settle.

The company scales. The threshold scales with it. The outside perspective, the one that can see what you can't because you're too close, stays just over the horizon.

There's also something specific going on in PLG companies. Because growth is driven by product usage rather than a traditional sales motion, the feedback loops can feel self-correcting. The product is doing the work. Things seem fine. The moment when you'd most benefit from a

strategic intervention often comes while top-line metrics still look reasonable. The urgency is buried in the numbers below the numbers.

What early actually looks like

The clients who've got the most from strategic engagements tend to share one thing: they came in before the problem was fully formed.

Not so early that there was nothing yet to diagnose, but early enough for the intervention to shape the trajectory instead of repairing the damage. The work was additive rather than remedial.

There's a real difference between "help us figure out why NRR has been declining for three quarters" and "help us build the revenue architecture that's going to carry us from \$3M to \$10M." Both are legitimate. But only one is working with a clean slate.

Remedial work costs more and takes longer. It has to fight the accumulated momentum of processes and habits that have been in place too long. Additive work moves faster, compounds better, and tends to pay back its cost earlier. In my experience, considerably earlier.

A simpler way to think about it

If you've been thinking "we're almost at the point where this makes sense" for more than a quarter, you're probably already past the point where it makes sense.

The cost of the engagement you're considering is visible. It's a line item. It feels concrete at this stage. What feels less concrete is the cost of the eight months you've already spent running sub-optimally. Or the next two quarters of the same. Those costs are real. They're just spread across a hundred small frictions rather than sitting in a single invoice.

Timing and fit both matter, and not every engagement is the right one. But "almost ready" is almost never as safe a position as it appears to be.