



Capvion Insights

Strategic perspectives on capital, growth and transformation

Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen

Why Enterprise Technology Is Starting to Feel Like Dinner at My House

What a chaotic family dinner taught me about leadership, focus, and why most technology failures are really failures of clarity

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with associates

Capvion Insights provides strategic perspectives on value creation, transformation, and leadership in technology and telecommunications businesses.

Each publication examines how strategy, capital, and execution interact to shape enterprise value in complex markets.

Drawing on extensive board-level, advisory, and operational experience, Capvion and its associates combine strategic thinking with real-world execution across numerous M&A transactions, platform integrations, and growth transformations in the technology and telecom sectors.

Our insights are designed to support founders, executives, and investors in navigating complex growth, restructuring, and transaction environments.

Each publication reflects Capvion's commitment to clarity, independence, and practical relevance.

Executive Insight

This month, a lighter story with a serious point. Most technology failures are not caused by bad ingredients. They are caused by kitchens where everybody is cooking and nobody is making dinner.

Across the technology and telecommunications businesses we work with, we rarely see organisations fail because of one catastrophic decision. They struggle because of hundreds of reasonable ones, each defensible on its own, that quietly pull in slightly different directions. Enthusiasm, not error, is the usual source of the chaos.

Three patterns consistently emerge:

- **Complexity compounds faster than value.** Every new platform, pilot and supplier feels additive, until the destination is lost in the noise.
- **Nobody is rewarded for saying no.** The market relentlessly encourages adding. Very few people stand up and ask whether the meal is actually getting better.
- **The scarce resource is clarity, not capability.** What rescues a stalled programme is rarely a new ingredient. It is someone deciding what dinner is.

The organisations that capture sustained value from technology are not the ones that fit the most ingredients into the dish. They are the ones with a chef.

Key Takeaways

- **Complexity rarely starts with bad intentions.**
It starts with enthusiasm. One good idea at a time, until the kitchen is full and nobody is leading.
- **The dangerous shift is from “what” to “everything.”**
Organisations drift from what they are trying to achieve to everything they could achieve, and the destination blurs.
- **You can spend extraordinary sums without one bad decision.**
Hundreds of sensible choices pulling in different directions can be more wasteful than a single visible mistake.
- **Clarity beats ingredients.**
What rescues a stalled programme is rarely a new capability. It is someone deciding what matters and what does not.
- **The best technology leaders create focus, not output.**
They protect limited attention, energy and capacity for change, and judge success by how well the parts work together.
- **When it works, nobody sees the complexity.**
Great dinners and great technology share one trait, they just work, and the effort behind them disappears.

Context

Last weekend I found myself standing in our kitchen surrounded by experts.

My wife had an opinion. My daughter had an opinion. My son wandered in with an opinion despite having absolutely no intention of helping. And my Spanish mother-in-law, who, to be fair, is usually right, definitely had an opinion.

Someone was chopping vegetables. Someone was moving pans. Someone was adjusting the temperature. Someone was opening cupboards and asking where things were. Everybody was contributing. Nobody was leading. Dinner was running late.

At some point my mother-in-law looked around, shook her head and delivered one of the great truths of modern management.

“Too many cooks in the kitchen.”

Then she did what great leaders tend to do. She quietly took control. Not in an aggressive way. Not because anybody else was incapable. Simply because somebody needed to decide what dinner was.

Within minutes the noise disappeared. People stopped debating and started helping. The confusion somehow turned into coordination.

The same ingredients were still sitting on the counter. The same people were still in the room. Nothing had fundamentally changed. Except one thing. There was now a chef.

Analysis

The older I get, the more I realise that leadership often looks exactly like that. Not having all the answers. Not doing everything yourself. Simply creating enough clarity that everybody else can contribute effectively. I keep seeing versions of that kitchen in boardrooms, technology teams and transformation programmes.

Nobody Is Doing Anything Wrong

The striking thing is that the chaos rarely comes from incompetence. The opposite, in fact. Most organisations are full of smart people trying to do the right thing. The challenge almost never starts with bad intentions. It starts with enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm Is the Real Source of Complexity

One team discovers a new AI capability and wants to explore it. Another sees an opportunity to modernise a process. A supplier introduces a new platform. A consultant presents a compelling vision of the future. Individually, none of these ideas are bad. Most are genuinely good. The trouble begins when all of them arrive in the kitchen at the same time.

The Shift from “What” to “Everything”

At some point the conversation quietly shifts. Instead of talking about what we are trying to achieve, we start talking about everything we could achieve. The destination becomes less clear with every new possibility.

We have seen organisations spend extraordinary amounts of money without ever making a truly bad decision. That is the surprising part. No catastrophic choice. No obvious mistake. Just hundreds of reasonable decisions pulling in slightly different directions. Nobody was trying to ruin the meal. They were simply creating complexity faster than dinner.

What Saved Us Was Not a Better Recipe

It was not a better ingredient. It was not a new kitchen appliance. It was clarity. My mother-in-law decided what we were making, and the rest suddenly became easier. Which ingredients mattered became obvious. Which activities mattered became obvious. Even which conversations mattered became obvious. Everything started serving the outcome instead of competing with it.

A World That Rewards Adding, Not Subtracting

That feels increasingly relevant in technology, because we live in a world that constantly encourages us to add. Another platform. Another capability. Another pilot. Another initiative. Another supplier. Yet very few people are rewarded for saying no. Very few people stand up and ask whether the meal is actually getting better.

The Trait the Best Technology Leaders Share

The best technology leaders we have worked with seem to possess a surprisingly similar trait. They create focus. They understand that every organisation has limited attention, limited energy and limited capacity for change. Most importantly, they understand that success is rarely determined by how many ingredients you can fit into the dish. It is determined by how well they work together.

When It Works, Nobody Notices the Complexity

After dinner was served, nobody talked about who chopped the vegetables. Nobody discussed which pan was used. Nobody congratulated themselves on process improvements in the kitchen. We simply enjoyed the meal. Because that is the thing about great dinners, and great technology. When they are working properly, nobody notices the complexity behind them. They just work.

"The best technology leaders are not the ones who add the most. They are the ones who decide what dinner is, and give everybody else permission to stop debating and start cooking."

Capvion Perspective

In our experience advising companies, investors, and operators across technology and telecommunications markets, the honest boardroom conversation is about clarity, not capability. Three habits separate the kitchens that produce a meal from the ones that produce noise.

Appoint the Chef Before You Stock the Kitchen

Name a single, accountable owner of the outcome before approving the next wave of platforms, pilots and suppliers. Not a committee. A person whose job is to decide what the meal is, and to defend that decision when the next exciting ingredient appears.

Reward the No, Not Just the Yes

Build governance that values subtraction. Make it as career-enhancing to stop an initiative as it is to start one. The discipline to scale only what works is worth more than the enthusiasm to try everything.

Measure the Meal, Not the Ingredients

Judge success by the outcome on the table, not by the count of initiatives, platforms or pilots underway. If the programme cannot point to the dinner it is making, it has too many cooks and no chef.

Conclusion

The next time you find yourself in a meeting discussing AI, cloud, data, transformation or whatever new ingredient the market is excited about this week, imagine a family kitchen. Lots of smart people. Lots of good intentions. Lots of opinions. Then ask yourself one simple question.

Do we have a chef?

Because most technology failures are not caused by bad ingredients. They are caused by kitchens where everybody is cooking and nobody is making dinner.

About Capvion

Capvion is a strategy and capital advisory firm that works with leadership teams, investors, and entrepreneurs on complex growth, transformation, and value creation challenges.

The firm combines strategic insight with hands-on operational and transaction experience across technology and telecommunications markets, advising companies and investors on corporate strategy, mergers and acquisitions, transaction readiness, and enterprise value optimisation.

Capvion operates as a senior-led advisory boutique, working closely with a network of experienced associates and industry specialists. This model allows the firm to bring in the right expertise at the right moment, combining strategic clarity with deep domain knowledge across transactions, integrations, and operational transformation.

Through its advisory work and publications such as Capvion Insights, the firm shares practical perspectives on how strategy, execution, and capital interact to shape enterprise outcomes.

For more information visit www.capvion.com or contact insights@capvion.com