



Getting access.

The stakeholder work CI strategy depends on.

You can identify exactly where the value is in a business. That doesn't mean the people there are expecting you.

SWIPE →



WHERE CI STRATEGY STARTS

Shaping a CI strategy starts by identifying where value is being lost or created across the business.

That answers where to point CI. It doesn't yet answer whether you can start working there.

THE QUESTION THAT FOLLOWS

The function with the clearest value opportunity still has people in it — and they decide whether you get in, not the strategy.



THE MISMATCH IN TIMING

**The CEO says go. The function head
hasn't agreed to receive you.**

You get the direction. Rarely the introduction.
Almost never the time to build one properly.

WHAT THIS ISN'T

Not a breakdown in communication.

Sponsorship and readiness were never the same commitment.



NOT A MAP. A RELATIONSHIP.

Stakeholder work isn't a grid with quadrants and colored dots.

It gets built the way any relationship does —
through real engagement, not a diagram of one.

WHAT ACCESS IS ACTUALLY BUILT ON

**People welcome you because of who you are with them.
Rarely because of what your title says you can ask for.**



YOU ARE A GUEST

**In every function, the CI team arrives
as a guest, not yet the resident expert.**

Walk in with conclusions before you've listened, and even good insight
can land the wrong way.

THE ONLY JOB, AT FIRST

**Learn what actually keeps this function up at night, before offering
a single opinion about it.**



WHAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY THINKING

Don't assume the function you're walking into already knows what CI is, or what working with it involves.

Some do. Many don't — and either way, they're forming their own read on why this person is now in their office.

THE UNSPOKEN QUESTIONS

**What's in this for me? What does working together actually look like?
Does this put my team, or my position, at any risk?**



NOT A FAVOR. A COLLABORATION.

Not a favor to CI.

A professional collaboration.

The first engagement with any stakeholder has one job:
make sure they see this for what it is, not what it might look like.

WHAT THIS ACTUALLY MEANS

**The CI team learning the business well enough to be useful to it,
as part of the leadership effort, not apart from it.**



WHEN IT DOESN'T LAND

**Some conversations open a function up.
Some don't, and that's not unusual.**

The work will bring you back to that same person again —
So, the question is never whether to return,
only how to make the next attempt actually work.

WHAT MAKES THE NEXT ONE DIFFERENT

**Look honestly at what didn't land the first time, and find a different way in.
Sometimes through someone else in their circle who can open what you couldn't.**



THE WHOLE CIRCLE

Almost every functional problem has roots reaching into other functions.

A maintenance issue is rarely only a maintenance issue. Pull the thread, and IT, planning, or engineering usually show up too.

Nothing stays contained for long.

GET TO KNOW. STOP GUESSING.

Understand the people who matter to your stakeholder, who they meet regularly and why, and every conversation after that gets easier to get right



NOT THERE YET

There's no initiative to point to yet, and that can feel like an uncomfortable place to sit.

But this stage isn't a warm-up before the real work starts. It's where trust either gets built or doesn't — long before any project earns a name.

WHAT'S ACTUALLY AT STAKE HERE

An open door, and a genuine hearing when priorities are decided.

Get this part wrong, and no insights afterward make up for it.



THE TAKEAWAY

You can plan a CI strategy at your desk. That's not where it gets built.

Whether it actually works gets decided in the rooms **where** the real decisions get made — one relationship at a time.

IF THIS RESONATED

- Follow Anna Plekhanova for more on CI, transformation, and operating models.
- Save this for your next CI stakeholder conversation.
- Agree, disagree, or seen this firsthand? Leave a comment.
- Visit annaplekhanova.com for more of my thinking and work.