The Clarity Partnership

A STRUCTURED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR PE-BACKED AND PRIVATELY-OWNED BUSINESSES

Technology Audit Framework

Service overview, scope, methodology, and deliverables.

SIX PILLARS · 2–4 WEEKS · FIXED FEE

An independent, structured technology assessment for businesses at inflection points.

Prepared by The Clarity Partnership

Interim CTO/CIO Services for Businesses at Inflection Points

theclaritypartnership.co.uk

1. OVERVIEW

A Clarity Technology Audit is an independent, structured assessment of a business's technology estate — systems, integrations, suppliers, governance, security, capability, and culture. It is designed to give leadership teams, boards, and Operating Partners a defensible view of technology risk, capability, and opportunity — with prioritised recommendations they can act on immediately.

This is a business-first assessment carried out by a senior operator, focused on the technology decisions that materially move enterprise value, delivery capability, or risk exposure. It is independent of any vendor relationship and produced with the interests of the business as the sole priority.

When to commission an audit

- Preparing for a PE exit or sale within 18–36 months and needing a clear view of technology risk before buyer DD surfaces it.
- Post-acquisition or post-carve-out, when the incoming business needs a rapid systems and process baseline.
- At the start of a Value Creation Plan period, to establish where technology can accelerate or block delivery.
- Following a significant change in leadership, particularly the departure of a key technology figure who held institutional knowledge.
- When stakeholder feedback and system reliability issues have grown organically and no one has a complete picture.
- Ahead of significant investment in new platforms, integration work, or AI adoption.

What the audit delivers

- A defensible, evidence-based view of the current technology estate.
- A prioritised risk register with named owners, delivery horizons, and commercial impact indicators.
- A phased implementation roadmap — Immediate priorities, First 90 Days, Six Month Outlook.
- A Quick Wins list and, importantly, a Do Not Do list.
- A structured basis for buyer-facing DD evidence, or for internal Value Creation Plan sequencing.

2. WHY THIS APPROACH IS DIFFERENT

Programmes rarely fail because of technology. They fail because of misaligned people, poor cross-level translation, cultural friction with vendors, and change that no one owns. The Clarity Technology Audit is built on this understanding — every finding is framed against the human, operational, and commercial realities the business is actually navigating.

What sets a Clarity audit apart

- Business-first framing. Every finding is anchored to a commercial or operational reality — not to a benchmark or a maturity model that means nothing to the CEO.
- Human-dimension awareness. Cultural fit of vendors, cross-level translation, ownership clarity, and adoption realities are treated as first-order findings, not appendices.
- PE-context aware. Where relevant, findings are framed against the buyer DD questions the business will face, rather than a generic best-practice checklist.
- Independent. No vendor allegiance. No downstream implementation upsell. The Clarity Partnership does not resell licences or take implementation partner referral fees.
- Actionable. Every finding has a recommended action, a proposed owner, a delivery horizon, and — critically — a Do Not Do list that protects the business from wasted investment.

3. SCOPE — SIX ASSESSMENT PILLARS

The audit is structured around six core pillars. Each pillar produces its own set of findings, risks, and recommendations, which are then integrated into the overall prioritised roadmap.

Pillar 1 — Technology Landscape & System Architecture

- Current systems in use across the business and how they interconnect.
- Legacy systems, duplication, and simplification opportunities.
- Configuration decisions and their operational impact.
- Documentation of integrations, data flows, and architecture decisions.
- Dependencies on individual people or single-source technical knowledge.

Pillar 2 — Integration & Automation

- The integration layer — how systems talk to each other, and how reliably.
- Automation platforms in use (Zapier, Make, native integrations, custom code).
- Error rates, monitoring, alerting, and error-handling in critical automations.
- Workflow ownership, naming standards, and version control.
- Fragility assessment: where does the business break if a single integration fails?

Pillar 3 — Governance, Decision Making & Ownership

- Formal governance structures for technology decisions — or their absence.
- Departmental tool selection and shadow IT patterns.
- Business owner vs technical owner clarity across systems.
- Change management processes and their consistency in practice.
- IT representation at leadership level and strategic voice.

Pillar 4 — Security, Access & Compliance

- Policy framework: what exists, what is understood, what is applied.
- Password management, admin access, and access review cadence.
- Device management, offboarding processes, and chain-of-custody.
- SaaS platform security posture and data flow visibility.
- Alignment of external IT support to the actual operating environment.

Pillar 5 — Training, Adoption & Ways of Working

- Onboarding — is it structured, and does it embed core systems consistently?
- Existing training content — inventory, quality, accessibility, and adoption.
- Communication tool fragmentation and default-channel clarity.
- Support pathways and how they are actually used by teams.
- Variability in system adoption across teams and its operational impact.

Pillar 6 — AI Readiness & Opportunity

- Current AI adoption state, tools in use, and awareness of AI policy.
- Prioritised use case identification aligned to commercial value.
- AI governance framework and responsible use guardrails.
- Data readiness for AI adoption — what needs to change first.

- Pragmatic quick wins in Client Success, Operations, Finance, and delivery.

Additional review areas (as required)

- System-by-system deep dives (Salesforce, ERP, HRIS, marketing automation, custom platforms).
- Third-party ecosystem review (external contractors, affiliates, partners).
- Specific commercial workflow analysis (quote-to-cash, month-end close, revenue recognition).
- Vendor and supplier contract review with commercial and cultural fit assessment.

4. METHODOLOGY

The audit is carried out through a structured, evidence-based methodology designed to produce reliable findings while respecting operational teams' time. Six methodology components run in parallel across the engagement.

1. Document and contract review

Analysis of policies (Information Security, AI, Incident Management, Third Party Risk), IT support agreements, role descriptions, training materials, internal process documentation, and platform-specific documentation. Assessment of what exists, what is current, and what is defensible.

2. Stakeholder conversations and feedback

Structured conversations with executive leadership, operations, commercial, finance, HR, IT, and — where relevant — external partners. Typical scope: 8–15 sessions of 30–60 minutes, designed to surface both the technology reality and the human dimension underneath it.

3. Systems and platform review

Direct assessment of the tools in use across the organisation. Integration dependencies, ownership, fragility, licensing, and rationalisation opportunities are examined systematically.

4. Risk identification

Evaluation of operational, technical, and commercial risks — including single points of failure, documentation gaps, governance vacuums, and processes dependent on individuals rather than systems. Every risk is scored, categorised, and given a named owner and delivery horizon.

5. Resourcing and capability assessment

Review of current IT and technical capacity, skill distribution, and role boundaries. Consideration of how well the current structure supports a modern multi-system, cloud-first environment.

6. Alignment with business needs

Consideration of future growth requirements, delivery pressures, exit horizon (where relevant), and client expectations. Every finding is tested against whether addressing it materially moves the business forward — commercially, operationally, or in the eyes of a buyer.

5. DELIVERABLES

The audit produces a comprehensive report structured to be useful at multiple levels — from executive board to operational team leads.

Core report sections

- Executive Summary — findings and recommendations at a level suitable for board and PE stakeholder review.
- Business Context — the operational reality shaping technology decisions.
- Methodology and Systems Landscape Overview — the assessment approach and complete platform inventory.
- Detailed Findings — organised by the six assessment pillars, with evidence and specific examples.
- System-by-System Review — deep-dives on business-critical platforms.
- Governance, Decision Making & Ownership — findings, gaps, and a recommended governance model.
- Security and Compliance Review — findings against best practice and DD expectations.
- Training, Adoption & Ways of Working — the cultural and behavioural findings.
- AI Readiness and Opportunity Review — current state and prioritised opportunities.
- Summary of Key Risks — integrated risk view across all pillars.
- Prioritised Roadmap — Immediate priorities (weeks 1–4), First 90 Days, Six Month Outlook.
- Quick Wins — high-impact, low-effort actions the business can start immediately.
- Do Not Do List — specific actions to avoid, with rationale.
- Conclusion — the integrated view and next steps.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Risk Register — scored, categorised, with named owners and delivery horizons.
- Appendix B: Systems Inventory — complete platform list with ownership, purpose, integrations, and status.
- Appendix C: Integration Overview — data flows, automation dependencies, and integration risk.
- Appendix D: Stakeholder Insight Summary — anonymised themes from stakeholder conversations.

6. TIMELINE & DELIVERY STRUCTURE

A standard Clarity Technology Audit runs over four weeks. Larger businesses or those with more complex estates may require a six-week variant. Timelines are agreed upfront.

Week 1 — Discovery and Stakeholder Engagement

Kick-off with executive sponsor. Document and contract review begins. Initial stakeholder interviews scheduled and started. Access to systems and evidence coordinated. Initial as-is landscape draft.

Week 2 — Deep Dive and Analysis

Stakeholder interviews continue and complete. Systems and platform review in depth. Integration layer analysis. Documentation and evidence gathered for every pillar. Initial risk identification and scoring.

Week 3 — Assessment and Recommendations

Findings drafted across the six pillars. Recommendations developed and tested against business context. Prioritised roadmap constructed. Quick Wins and Do Not Do lists finalised. Risk register scored.

Week 4 — Delivery and Presentation

Full report delivered. Executive presentation of findings, recommendations, and roadmap. Prioritisation workshop with leadership team. Named decisions and follow-on engagement options discussed.

7. ENGAGEMENT MODEL & FEES

Standard Technology Audit

- Fixed fee: £16,500 + VAT for the 4-week engagement, all deliverables and executive presentation included.
- Duration: 4 weeks from kick-off.
- Access required: executive sponsor, IT lead, department leads, existing documentation, systems as agreed.

Extended Technology Audit (larger or more complex estates)

- Fixed fee: £22,500 + VAT for the 6-week engagement.
- Duration: 6 weeks from kick-off.
- Includes deeper system-by-system reviews, additional stakeholder sessions, and extended appendices.

DD Readiness Assessment (focused variant)

- Fixed fee: £9,500 + VAT for a 5-day client engagement.
- Scored against the specific questions buyers ask in technology due diligence.
- Outputs a prioritised remediation plan focused on exit-blocking risk.

Follow-on engagement options

- VCP-to-actionable-roadmap engagement to translate findings into a delivery plan (3–6 weeks).
- Interim or fractional Technical & Transformation leadership to close the identified risks (12 weeks to 12 months).
- DD evidence pack assembly for buyer-facing due diligence (4–6 weeks).

IR35 and contracting

- All engagements structured outside IR35 through The Clarity Partnership.
- Contracts include substitution clause, defined deliverables, and business-owned working practices consistent with HMRC CEST criteria.

8. WHAT BUSINESSES TYPICALLY LEARN FROM A CLARITY AUDIT

Every audit surfaces findings specific to the business. Consistent patterns across recent engagements include:

- Single-person dependencies in critical systems — typically Salesforce, integration layers, or bespoke internal platforms — that would materially delay buyer DD.
- Supplier contracts where actual spend is materially higher than the contracted base, often with KPIs that were never formally agreed at signature.
- Policy stacks that exist on paper but are inconsistently applied in practice — with obvious gaps against buyer DD expectations.
- Integration layers built organically over years, without documentation or version control, that constitute significant operational risk.
- Absence of a defensible AI position — no policy, no adoption framework, no clear boundary between what is permitted and what is not.
- Governance vacuums where technology decisions are made without cross-functional visibility, driving fragmentation and duplicated spend.
- Training content that exists but is unstructured — leading to inconsistent system adoption and unnecessary IT support load.
- External IT support arrangements designed for an on-premises world, mismatched to a cloud-first operating reality.

The value of the audit is in naming these findings clearly, prioritising them against real commercial and delivery horizons, and giving leadership teams a defensible starting point for action.

9. WHO DELIVERS THE AUDIT

The audit is led personally by James Scott, founder of The Clarity Partnership, with nearly thirty years of transformation, integration, and enterprise programme delivery across Unilever, Samsung, General Mills, Gravity Media, and PE-backed portfolio companies.

Every stakeholder conversation, every finding, and every recommendation is delivered by the same senior operator from start to finish. The value is in the personal delivery — direct experience of leading programmes at the scale being assessed, applied to the specific context of your business.

10. NEXT STEPS

- A 30-minute introductory call to discuss the business context, exit or growth timeline, and specific concerns.
- An agreed audit scope, timeline, and start date.
- Delivery of the audit within the agreed timeframe, culminating in the executive presentation.
- Discussion of follow-on engagement options based on the findings.

The Clarity Partnership

Execution partner, not advisor.

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