OWNERSHIP AMORTIZATION

Transformation was never supposed to change who's in control of the technology.

A storm rolls through a utility's service territory. Crews are staged, outage tickets are queued, and the SAP platform behind the whole operation is doing exactly what it was built to do: customer records are accurate, billing is available, security controls are holding. Nothing is technically broken.

And yet, restoring service for a single customer stalls, because customer operations, infrastructure, security, and finance each have a legitimate claim on who makes the call.

That gap already has an owner on paper. It's called the Roles and Responsibilities document, and it comes with every SAP RISE contract. Most organizations read it once, during signing, and never open it again.

Precise on Day One

The R&R isn't marketing material. It's a formal contractual exhibit: a task-by-task matrix that assigns every operational responsibility in the environment to SAP, to the customer, or to both. Infrastructure. Security. Application support. Custom code. Integration. Line by line, it answers the exact question that stalls a storm response: whose job is this?

At signing, that answer is precise, because organizations negotiate this document hard. It's worth millions of dollars across the life of the contract.

The problem begins the day after signing. The R&R is frozen the moment it's executed. The organization it describes is not.

Every finance team already understands amortization: a contract's recorded value declining across its life on a fixed schedule, whether or not anyone updates the paperwork. Almost none apply that same thinking to what the contract says about who's actually in charge. We call this Ownership Amortization: the governance value of a document quietly declining from the day it's signed, even though the document itself never changes.

Every acquisition, every AI initiative, every security program, every regulatory change, every retirement moves a decision from one desk to another. None of it gets reflected in the one document that's supposed to say who owns what now.

RISE customers see this most clearly, because SAP put it in writing. Utilities running through a hyperscaler-hosted managed services partner, or their own private cloud, know it under a different name: an MSA, a RACI chart, an internal operating agreement. Whatever it's called, ownership amortizes the same way.

Why Utilities Feel This First

Utilities feel this earlier than most industries, for a simple reason: the people quietly holding the real version of this document together are retiring. These are the ones who know the R&R says one thing while the actual process has moved somewhere else. When they leave, the organization loses more than a person. It loses the last one who could see how far ownership had already amortized away from what the document still claims.

And a regulator reviewing an outage, a security incident, or an audit finding will not accept “the contract says it was shared” as an answer. They will ask who was responsible, and they will expect a name, not a clause.

Getting ahead of that question, instead of discovering it during an audit, depends on who's actually paying attention before anything breaks.

Where Most Advisory Work Stops Short

Traditional advisory models rarely reward closing this kind of gap quickly. The larger the firm, the more its business model depends on ambiguity lasting long enough to bill against: another workstream, another change order, another year of managed services layered on top of a document nobody wants to reopen. Speed and candor about the R&R aren't rewarded in that model. They're a threat to it.

We recently scoped a multi-month remediation engagement for a utility whose GRC and identity governance tooling had drifted so far from how access was actually being provisioned that nobody could say with confidence who owned an unmitigated user until one surfaced in an audit. Unwinding it took months and ran into six figures. The technology wasn't the constraint. Nobody had kept the ownership question current since the systems went live.

A firm with that incentive structure can afford to let the gap sit. We can't, and we don't want to. Being small enough to send the person who helped write the reference architecture, instead of a team assembled after the contract is signed, was never a limitation to work around. It's the entire point.

Transformation was never supposed to change who's in control of the technology. But over time, it often does.

Ownership Amortization isn't a technology problem. It's the mechanism behind a larger pattern: any document that once answered “who's in charge” and has quietly stopped being true since, whether that's an R&R, an MSA, a RACI chart, an M&A integration plan, or an AI governance charter. SAP is simply where it's easiest to see and prove.

This is the first Executive Perspective in a series exploring the executive operating patterns that emerge after enterprise transformation succeeds. If any of this sounds familiar inside your own organization, that recognition is exactly what an Executive Operating Model Assessment is built to test: governance, accountability, decision rights, and operating model alignment, examined against the organization you have today, not the one described in the agreement you signed.

About the author

Joe Markgraf is the founder of Markgraf Consulting, an advisory practice focused on SAP security, governance, and operational resilience. Before founding Markgraf, he worked as a cloud architect and technical quality manager at SAP and SAP NS2, where he helped design the cloud reference architecture that would later become part of RISE with SAP, including the roles and responsibilities framework at the center of this piece. He now advises enterprise and utility SAP customers on the operating patterns that determine whether transformation holds up long after go-live.

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