

The Morphosis/Dunamis Pressure Test

Three diagnostic questions that reveal whether your organization is structurally sound or structurally sophisticated.

THE DIAGNOSTIC PREMISE

In 2 Timothy 3, Paul names two conditions that can exist simultaneously in an organization: morphosis, the outward structural form, and dunamis, the animating power. The dangerous condition is when the form is present and the power has been displaced. The metrics look intact. The programs are running. The structure appears healthy. But the interior organizing center has quietly shifted.

Normal operating conditions rarely reveal this. The three tests below are not metrics. They are pressure conditions. Apply them honestly before the external environment applies them for you.

01

The Movement Test

What moves without the leader present, and what stops?

Map the decisions, relationships, and functions that require a specific person's presence or approval to proceed. Not the decisions that person should make, but the ones that simply will not move without them.

STRUCTURAL HEALTH SIGNAL

Key functions, client relationships, and decisions continue at appropriate levels without any single person present. Knowledge is documented. Authority is distributed to where decisions actually live.

STRUCTURAL FRAGILITY SIGNAL

Significant functions stall, client relationships are on hold, or key decisions are queued waiting for one person's return. The organization is more dependent on presence than it appears under normal conditions.

02

The Budget Test

What survives a 30% budget reduction, and what disappears?

Apply a hypothetical 30% budget reduction and identify what you would protect and what you would cut. The items that disappear first reveal what was load-bearing in function versus what was load-bearing in appearance.

STRUCTURAL HEALTH SIGNAL

The core mission-critical functions are clearly distinguishable from the supporting programs. Cuts are painful but the organization knows what it cannot lose and why. The distinction is principled, not reactive.

STRUCTURAL FRAGILITY SIGNAL

The cuts feel equally difficult everywhere, or the organization discovers it has been funding programs that were producing activity rather than outcomes. The budget pressure reveals that sophistication and substance were not cleanly separated.

03

The Failure Response Test

When something fails, what does the response reveal about what the organization actually believes?

Observe the next significant failure: a missed target, a lost client, a program that did not produce, a key departure. The response to failure is the most reliable indicator of interior organizational culture because it is the least managed moment.

STRUCTURAL HEALTH SIGNAL

The organization can name what failed, why it failed, and what it will do differently without collapsing into blame, defensiveness, or denial. Failure is treated as diagnostic information rather than reputational threat.

STRUCTURAL FRAGILITY SIGNAL

The response moves quickly to explanation, external attribution, or forward momentum without sitting with the diagnostic honestly. The organization treats failure as something to manage rather than something to learn from.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

For individual leaders: Work through each test in writing before discussing with your team. The written answer is more honest than the spoken one.

For leadership teams: Run each test independently, then compare answers. The gaps between responses are often more diagnostic than any individual answer.

For boards and governance: Use the three tests as a structured annual diagnostic separate from the financial and program review. They measure what the other instruments do not.

The goal is not to produce a score. It is to surface what normal operating conditions are concealing. If the three tests reveal something worth thinking through further, a free 20-minute conversation is available at kingdomplanning.org/book-online.