**Why Insurance Transformations Fail at the Talent Layer

(And What Actually Works)**

A practical perspective for insurance technology
and delivery leaders

Executive Summary

- Over the last decade, insurance organizations have invested heavily in platform modernization. Core system upgrades, digital initiatives, and large transformation programs—often centered around platforms like Guidewire—are now standard.

- And yet, many of these efforts struggle to deliver lasting results.

- Budgets expand. Timelines slip. After go-live, progress slows instead of accelerating. Internal teams feel dependent on vendors rather than empowered by the new platform.

- When this happens, the problem is rarely the technology.

- More often, it's the **talent layer.**

- This paper looks at why insurance transformations break down at the delivery and people level—and what organizations can do differently to build sustainable momentum without increasing risk or cost.

A Pattern Most Insurance Leaders Recognize

Transformation programs usually begin with confidence.

The roadmap is clear. The system integrator is experienced. Early milestones are met. Executive support is strong.

Then, gradually:

- Key consultants rotate off
- Platform knowledge remains external
- Internal teams struggle to take ownership
- Enhancements take longer than expected
- Costs continue well beyond implementation

The platform goes live—but progress slows.
What was meant to simplify delivery often introduces a new dependency.

Why Insurance Platforms Are Especially Exposed

Insurance platforms are not generic enterprise systems. They are:

• Deeply customized

• Central to underwriting, policy, and claims operations

• Highly regulated and difficult to change

As a result, delivery depends on specialized expertise long after implementation.

Common challenges include:

• Heavy reliance on a small group of experts

• Limited overlap between SI teams and internal staff

• Gaps during transition and stabilization phases

• High ongoing costs to maintain forward momentum

The technology may be sound. The delivery model often isn't.

Where Things Actually Break: The Talent Layer

Most transformation challenges aren't caused by poor intent or weak planning. They stem from how talent is structured.

Typical issues include:

• Short-term staffing models supporting long-term platforms

• High consultant churn mid-program

• Knowledge transfer treated as a milestone, not a discipline

• Internal teams engaged too late to build real ownership

When expertise lives outside the organization, every change becomes slower—and more expensive.

The Cost of Getting This Wrong
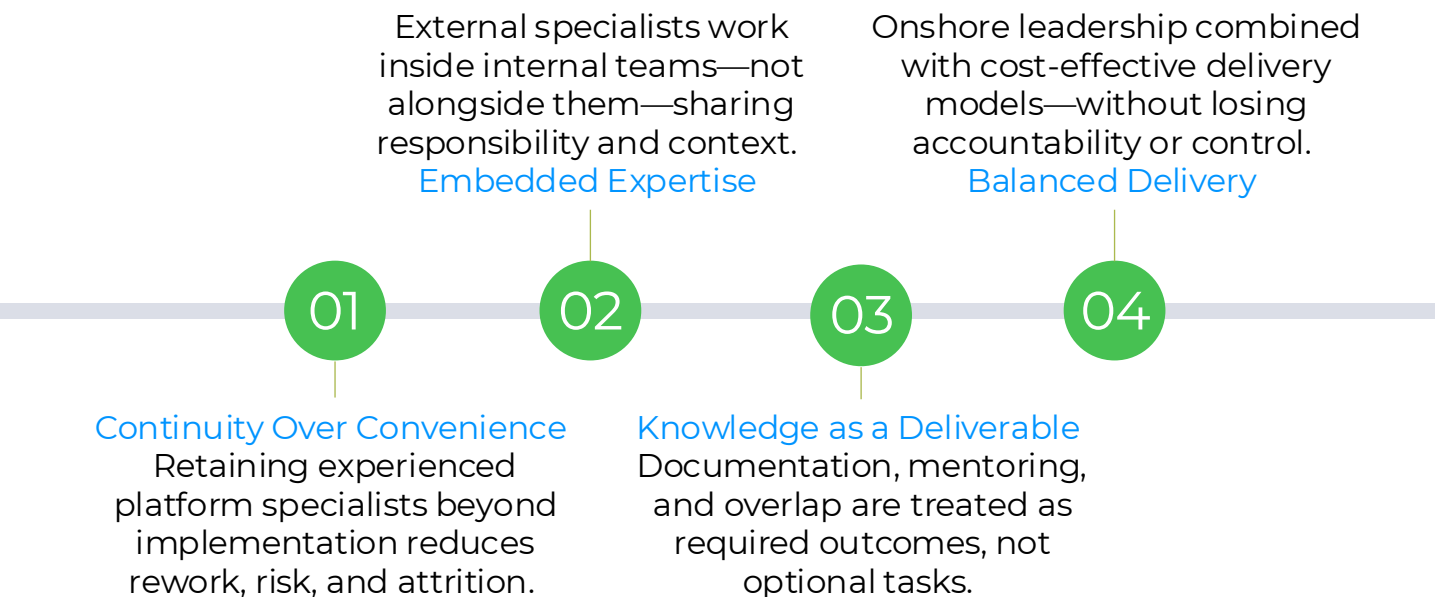
The impact builds quietly over time:

- Slower release and enhancement cycles
- Increased dependency on system integrators
- Higher run costs post-implementation
- Reduced confidence within internal teams
- Difficulty attracting and retaining strong platform talent

In some cases, organizations modernize their systems—only to feel less agile than before.

What Actually Works: A More Sustainable Delivery Model

Organizations that succeed approach talent as a long-term capability, not a project expense.

Effective models tend to share four characteristics:

External specialists work inside internal teams—not alongside them—sharing responsibility and context.
Embedded Expertise

Onshore leadership combined with cost-effective delivery models—without losing accountability or control.
Balanced Delivery

01 **02** **03** **04**

Continuity Over Convenience
Retaining experienced platform specialists beyond implementation reduces rework, risk, and attrition.

Knowledge as a Deliverable
Documentation, mentoring, and overlap are treated as required outcomes, not optional tasks.

This approach doesn't eliminate system integrators. It reduces dependence on them.

What This Looks Like in Practice

In practice, the shift is gradual.

A carrier completes a major platform rollout. Instead of fully disengaging external expertise, a small, stable team remains embedded. Internal staff work alongside experienced specialists. Ownership shifts steadily inward.
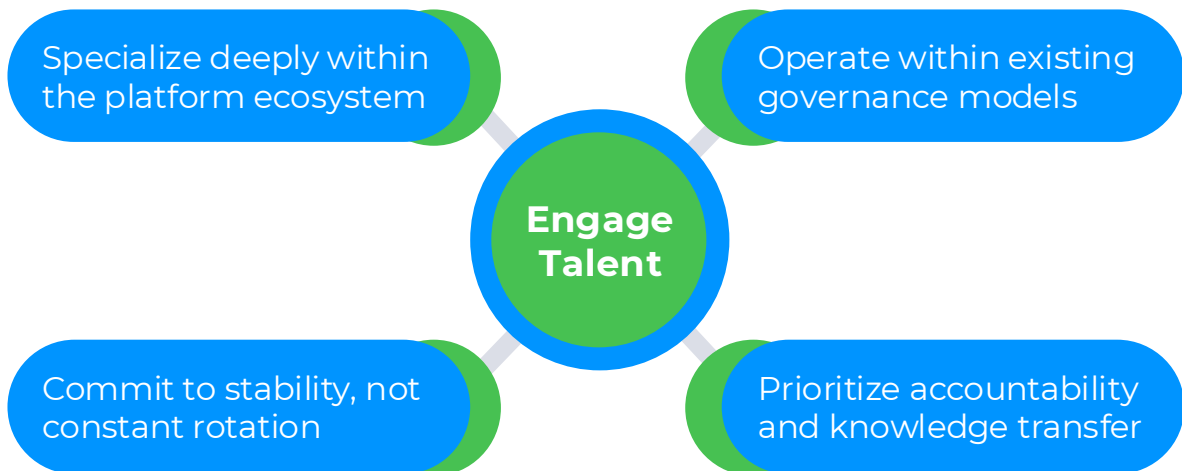
Over time:

- Enhancements move faster
- Support becomes more predictable
- Internal confidence improves

The platform becomes something the organization runs—not something it waits on.

How Insurance Organizations Engage Talent More Effectively

Organizations that build lasting momentum tend to partner with teams that:

Specialize deeply within the platform ecosystem

Operate within existing governance models

Engage Talent

Commit to stability, not constant rotation

Prioritize accountability and knowledge transfer

The objective is not to replace internal teams.
It is to strengthen them.

Closing Thoughts

- Insurance transformations don't fail because platforms are flawed. They struggle when talent decisions are treated as tactical rather than strategic.

- Lasting success comes from investing as deliberately in delivery capability as in technology.

Rockwoods supports insurance organizations by providing platform-focused consultants who emphasize continuity, embedded delivery, and long-term ownership.