Business observability: A new discipline for post-transformation continuity
From Intent to Outcome Series
Author: El Mehdi Kadaoui
Version: 1.0
Published: July 2025

From Intent to Outcome Series: Business Observability

A New Discipline for Post-Transformation Reality

By El Mehdi Kadaoui

We ask the wrong question after transformation.

We ask: Is the system live?

We should be asking: Did we succeed?

That question often goes unanswered, not due to a lack of data, but a lack of structure.

IT teams have observability. They can see what their systems are doing, second by second. But the business? It typically has no equivalent. It operates post-go-live in partial blindness with no formal way to track whether the transformation is still aligned with its original purpose.

This article introduces business observability: a structured discipline that enables organizations to continuously track whether a transformation's intended value, behaviors, and outcomes are actually materializing.

1. IT observability is mature. Business observability doesn't exist

In modern infrastructure, observability is foundational. Engineers don't wait for outages to occur, they build systems with real-time telemetry. Logs, metrics, and traces feed dashboards that show system behavior across services, locations, and time.

But transformation is not just a system deployment. It's a change in business logic, behavior, structure, and accountability. And yet, the business often has no comparable observability layer.

After go-live, there is no visibility into whether:

- The new process is actually being followed

- Waived constraints were ever revisited
- Behavior aligns with the transformation’s goals
- The business is still delivering what the strategy intended

It’s not that the business doesn’t have metrics…It does. What it lacks is a mechanism to track whether outcomes are still connected to intent, whether value is emerging as expected, or whether the business is sliding quietly into drift or workaround mode.

How business observability compares to IT observability

Aspect	IT observability	Business observability
Purpose	Monitor system behavior and performance in real time	Assess whether transformation outcomes are taking hold and lasting
Focus	System health, performance, and errors	Intent, value, and behavioral alignment
Signals tracked	Metrics, logs, traces	Adoption patterns, decision logic, value shifts
Start point	Begins in development and continues through operations	Begins during delivery and persists across future change
Ownership	DevOps, SREs, engineering teams	Transformation owners, function leads, OD stewards
Detects	Failures, anomalies, latency	Logic drift, missed value, behavioral reversion
Outcome	Resilient, performant systems	Aligned, value-generating business behavior

2. Go-live is not the finish line

Go-live is often celebrated as the final step in a transformation journey. But technically launching a system or rolling out a process says little about whether the business is using it effectively, adopting new behaviors, or delivering measurable impact.

Many organizations declare success at go-live, only to discover months later that:

- Frontline teams are still relying on manual tools and workarounds

- Users never fully adopted the new process
- Compliance shortcuts were never revisited
- Original business goals have been deprioritized or forgotten

This is not failure in the traditional sense. It's decay, invisible in status reports, yet deeply impactful to outcomes. And without a business observability framework in place, these signals are lost until they become problems too large to ignore.

3. Success lives in the gray zone

Too often, organizations evaluate transformation success in binary terms: it worked or it didn't. But the reality is more complex. Most programs deliver partial realization:

- Some value is achieved, but not across all regions or functions
- Some behaviors change, but others revert
- Some logic is followed, but local overrides dilute the structure

This gray zone is where most transformations live; between intent and improvisation, between declared value and actual usage. It's where teams adapt in ways that are sometimes useful, but often structurally misaligned.

Without business observability, this gray zone becomes ungovernable. We cannot improve what we cannot see. We cannot steer what we cannot sense.

And most dangerously, we may assume we succeeded because the system is operational, even as the business drifts silently back to its old ways.

4. What the business needs to observe

Observability doesn't mean watching everything.

It means being able to see the right things (at the right time) to know whether a transformation is working.

What must the business observe?

- Intent:

Can we trace today's behavior to the logic that justified the change?

- Value:
  Are the promised benefits (cost, speed, experience, compliance) actually materializing?

- Adoption:
  Are users engaging with the new tools, processes, or structures or finding ways around them?

- Behavior:
  Are decisions aligned with the designed state or are old mental models reasserting themselves?

- Continuity:
  As new changes occur; releases, restructures, parallel programs, are we still holding the line?

Business observability is not about more data.
It's about maintaining traceability between intent and outcome, even as the system evolves.

5. Business observability starts in delivery, not after go-live

The biggest mistake is treating observability as a post-go-live activity. It's not.

It must begin during delivery, when behaviors are forming, when outcomes are being built, not just implemented.

In agile and iterative environments, business observability must become part of the rhythm, not a checkpoint after the fact.

Dimension	**Key principles**
When	- Begin as soon as outcomes are defined - Embed observability logic during delivery, not after go-live
How	- Anchor key decisions to traceable intents - Define value and adoption signals early - Use realization checkpoints across delivery - Track usage patterns, behavioral drift, and workarounds continuously
Who	- Business stakeholders must own observability - PMs and delivery teams can support but should not lead - Without business ownership, observability becomes hollow reporting

So what is the right truth?

Business observability is not just a post-transformation function.

It's a **persistent governance capability**, not a constant stream like IT observability, but a layer the business must maintain to protect value and alignment over time.

While it may operate with less frequency and automation than IT's telemetry, it's no less essential. Why?

- Transformations cascade. One change triggers another.
- Drift is structural. It can emerge months or even years later.
- Dependencies grow. One release can destabilize another domain.
- Behavior is fragile. Even adopted change can revert if no one is watching.

IT observability is about uptime and performance.

Business observability is about coherence and continuity and without it, we're flying blind between transformations.

Conclusion: If value is strategic, observability must be structural

Every transformation is meant to deliver value.
But value is not just a function of delivery. It is a function of continuity, behavior, and alignment.

If we believe in strategic intent, we must build the means to protect it.
That means giving the business a real ability to see whether change is holding or unraveling.

Business observability is not a metric layer. It is not a dashboard.

It is a structural discipline the business must own to ensure outcomes remain real, traceable, and defensible especially when change doesn't stop.

Transformation doesn't end at go-live. It endures only when the business holds the line deliberately, visibly, and with integrity.