

DON'T SCALE AN ASSUMPTION

Executive Briefings

Key Takeaways

- **Validate the assumptions behind a successful property-level improvement before extending it across the portfolio.**
- **Use pilots to learn what is different, missing, or unexpected — not merely to prove that a chosen solution works.**
- **Define what must be consistent across the portfolio while preserving local differences that genuinely matter.**

Estimated Reading Time: 5 minutes

A good idea at one property does not automatically become a good portfolio-wide solution.

It may.

But first, prove what you think you know.

As 2027 priorities move toward execution, the appeal of scale becomes powerful. If an improvement can reduce effort, increase visibility, simplify operations, or create value at one property, extending it across the portfolio appears to multiply the return.

It can also multiply a mistake.

Before scaling an improvement, make sure the assumptions underneath it can survive contact with the rest of the portfolio.

Similar Buildings Are Not the Same Building

Portfolio-level planning naturally looks for commonality.

That is useful. Common processes and shared capabilities can create substantial leverage.

But properties that appear similar from the executive level may operate differently in ways that matter during implementation.

Building systems differ. Tenant requirements differ. Vendor relationships differ. Staffing models differ. Local practices evolve. Acquired properties may carry technology and processes inherited from previous ownership.

Even terminology can vary.

A solution designed around one property's reality may encounter a very different reality at another.

That does not mean every property needs its own solution.

It means leadership should understand the important differences before deciding which ones can safely be standardized.

Scale what's common. Accommodate what's consequentially different.

Test the Assumptions Behind the Plan

Every project begins with assumptions.

We believe the information exists.

We believe systems can exchange it.

We believe properties follow roughly the same process.

We believe employees use the current tools in similar ways.

We believe a vendor can support what we need.

We believe the improvement that worked here will work there.

Some of those assumptions will be correct.

Find out which ones.

Talk with the people who manage the affected properties and processes. Compare how the work actually happens. Examine the information being used. Identify exceptions before implementation turns them into surprises.

The purpose is not to prove the project wrong.

It's to give the project a better chance of being right.

Pilot to Learn, Not Merely to Prove

A pilot can be one of the most valuable steps in a portfolio-wide improvement.

It can also become theater.

If everyone enters the pilot determined to demonstrate that the chosen solution works, the organization may learn very little.

A useful pilot tests assumptions.

Where does the process behave differently than expected? What information is missing? What requires more employee intervention than anticipated? Which integrations work cleanly — and which do not? What did the project team fail to consider?

Those discoveries aren't failures.

They're the reason to pilot.

The objective is not to produce a perfect first implementation that confirms leadership made the right decision.

The objective is to learn cheaply before learning becomes expensive.

Then apply what was learned before moving to the next property.

Prepare the Portfolio, Not Just the Technology

Technology may be ready long before the organization is.

A platform can be configured. An integration can be tested. Equipment can be installed.

But people still have to operate differently.

Who owns the new process at each property? Which responsibilities change? What local practices will disappear? What exceptions remain? How will employees be trained? Who answers questions when the new approach encounters something the implementation team did not anticipate?

And what happens to the old process?

That final question deserves more attention than it often receives.

Organizations sometimes introduce something new without deliberately retiring what it replaced. Employees then maintain both — partly from habit, partly from uncertainty, and partly because nobody explicitly told them when the old way should stop.

Modernization that adds a new process without removing an old one can increase complexity instead of reducing it.

Prepare for subtraction as carefully as addition.

Define What Must Be Consistent

Portfolio-wide improvement doesn't require every property to operate identically.

It requires agreement about what **must** be consistent.

Perhaps the data definitions need to be common while local workflows remain flexible. Perhaps reporting must be standardized while properties retain different operational processes. Perhaps security requirements are non-negotiable while individual buildings can select among approved approaches.

Make those boundaries explicit.

Without them, standardization can become an argument at every implementation.

Too much flexibility recreates fragmentation.

Too little ignores legitimate property differences.

Preparation means deciding where consistency creates value before the rollout begins.

Closing Thought

The ability to deploy an improvement broadly is one of the advantages of managing a portfolio.

Do not rush past the learning that makes that advantage valuable.

Use the remaining weeks before execution to validate the assumptions, understand the meaningful differences, involve the people closest to the work, and decide what the organization will standardize.

Then scale.

Not because something worked once.

Because you understand **why** it worked — and what must be true for it to work **again**.

Finish strong by testing what you think you know. Start stronger by scaling what you've learned.

Start the Conversation

- Every successful modernization initiative begins with a shared understanding of where you are today and where you want to go next.
- If your leadership team is evaluating modernization priorities, Anchor Bridge Innovations would welcome the opportunity to start that conversation.