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Unlocking Value In Biopharma Operations: A C-Suite Call To Action

By Lisa Cozza, Tunnell Consulting

If you're a C-suite executive in biopharma right now, here's a strong but hopeful message: You may be sitting on a tremendous — and largely untapped — opportunity. Whether you lead a CDMO, a biotech innovator, or a combination of both, the path forward is the same: Operational readiness will separate the leaders from the laggards.



The Pressure Is Real — And Growing

You already know the headline risks: inflation, tighter capital, tariff threats, and fragile supply chains. None of these are temporary. They signal a shift — and it's one that rewards adaptability, not size. Yet, in many executive suites, the reaction has been to pause. To freeze spending. Delay transformation. Wait for clarity. But in this industry, waiting is already a decision — and often the wrong one.

What Bold Looks Like

Across the sector, some companies are choosing differently. They're not waiting — they're moving.

- A midsize CDMO decentralized its planning model, building regional autonomy that allowed it to shift production within 72 hours of a supply chain disruption.
- A multinational CDMO empowered teams, under the direction of operational excellence processes, to turn around quality concerns and build pride and accountability at the site levels.
- A biotech firm reorganized 20% of its staff into a readiness team focused on cutting cycle times and preparing for accelerated tech transfers. Within six months, they shaved weeks off their lead time.
- One global therapeutics company created a cross-functional war room — not for crisis response but for continuous scenario planning. That team has since identified over \$40 million in cost avoidance and cycle compression opportunities.

These aren't anomalies. They're previews of what smart, bold leadership looks like — even under pressure.

Strategic Pause, Not Stagnation

This moment isn't about freezing. It's about pausing with purpose. The difference is intention.

- Strategic leaders use this slowdown to assess honestly, restructure quietly, and prepare to move fast.
- Reactive organizations stay still, hoping stability returns before they're forced to act.

This is your chance to retool, retrain, and reinforce your operational core. Not for optics but for advantage. And critically: None of this requires a major capital investment. It requires courage, clarity, time, and leadership.

The Hidden Advantage: Operational Readiness

When the market rebounds — and it will — the companies that sprint ahead will be the ones that prepared while others stood still. Operational readiness means more than uptime or efficiency. It means:

- Zero tolerance for inefficiencies. If it doesn't create value, fix it or cut it.
- Flexible, cross-trained teams. One expert per function is fragile. Build depth.
- Faster decisions. Flatten hierarchies and empower the people who know the work.
- Redundant supply chains. Resilience isn't wasteful; it's strategic.
- Frontline intelligence. Your operators see what PowerPoints miss.
- Ongoing diagnostics. Don't wait for a crisis to learn where you're exposed.

This approach isn't theoretical — it's already being executed. And it ties directly into the actionable next steps below.

Your Immediate Playbook: Turning Strategy Into Action

The path forward doesn't have to be abstract. You can act now by combining assessment, alignment, execution, empowerment, and adaptation into an integrated operational rhythm:

1. Assess Deeply

- Audit workflows to uncover bottlenecks, redundancies, and friction points that slow progress.
- Run diagnostics and data-driven risk assessments to reveal hidden vulnerabilities.
- Gather real-time insights from operators and frontline teams — the people closest to the work.

2. Align Broadly

- Break down silos across operations, R&D, supply chain, and commercial to create a unified focus.
- Clarify decision ownership and remove approval bottlenecks to speed execution.
- Prioritize initiatives based on clear value creation, not internal politics or legacy practices.

3. Execute Ruthlessly

- Eliminate low-value or redundant tasks that drain resources and attention.
- Build flexibility and redundancy into supply chains to withstand disruptions.
- Streamline governance structures so approvals facilitate rather than stall progress.

4. Empower Teams

- Invest in training that builds flexibility, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, not just compliance checklists.
- Push decision rights closer to where work happens, trusting frontline leaders.
- Recognize and develop emerging leaders who can drive continuous improvement and operational excellence.

5. Adapt Continuously

- Implement short-cycle check-ins and review loops to measure progress and course-correct quickly.
- Foster a culture of learning that encourages experimentation and speed over perfection.
- Use feedback from every level to refine processes and enhance responsiveness.

6. Engage on the Floor

- Walk the production floor regularly to hear directly what's working and what's not.
- Use these insights to spot emerging issues before they become crises and to validate improvements.

7. Build for the Future

- Identify and nurture your next generation of leaders — those driving these changes build the resilience, creativity, and communication skills that will shape your company's future.
- Invest in digital tools and analytics that support proactive decision-making and ongoing diagnostics.

The Bottom Line: Boldness Is The Strategy

In biopharma, long cycles and high stakes make inertia tempting. But transformation doesn't happen when things are easy. It happens when leaders act despite uncertainty. Somewhere right now, a competitor is not waiting. They're empowering teams. They're fixing broken systems. They're building operational muscle that will let them outpace you when the market turns.

Will you be catching up — or leading the charge?

About The Author:

Lisa Cozza is principal consultant at [Tunnell Consulting](#) and a seasoned executive with over 35 years' experience in biomanufacturing and cGMP operations, quality, and supply chain for bulk drug and final drug product in all stages of clinical and commercial production.

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