Vancriskhom's Investors

Early Warning Signals in Growing Companies

What to notice while the numbers still look good

Signal 1: Decisions Are Getting Faster—but Worse

"We'll fix it later" becomes a strategy.

What You See

- **Shorter decision cycles**
- **Fewer dissenting views**
- **Reversals becoming frequent**

Why It Matters

Speed without reflection erodes judgment.
Growth amplifies every bad call.

Investor Move

Ask *who* slowed the last major decision—and *why*.

Signal 2: Founders Are Everywhere (And Nowhere)

Heroics replace systems.

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What You See

- Founders in every meeting
- Bottlenecks around approvals
- "Only X can decide this" syndrome

Why It Matters

Founder energy masks structural gaps—until it burns out.

Investor Move

Ask how decisions happen without founders present.

Signal 3: Metrics Multiply, Insight Shrinks

Dashboards grow. Understanding doesn't.

What You See

- New KPIs added every quarter
- Fewer explanations for *why* numbers move
- Teams optimizing locally, not holistically

Why It Matters

Data without interpretation breeds false confidence.

Investor Move
Remove the deck. Ask founders to explain last quarter from memory.

Signal 4: Governance Is "Deferred"

Because growth feels urgent.

What You See

- **Cap table cleanups postponed**
- **Role clarity "in progress"**
- **Board cadence irregular or performative**

Why It Matters

Deferred governance becomes forced governance—usually under stress.

Investor Move

Notice whether governance discussions feel welcome or inconvenient.

Signal 5: Hiring Is Reactive

Roles are filled to plug leaks, not build capacity.

What You See

- **Senior hires without mandates**
- **Overlapping responsibilities**
- **Culture strain explained away as "hypergrowth"**

Why It Matters
Reactive hiring creates political friction and execution drag.

Investor Move
Ask what success looks like for the last three hires—concretely.

Signal 6: Feedback Starts Traveling Sideways

People talk around issues, not through them.

What You See

- **Backchannel complaints**
- **Investor updates avoid hard topics**
- **Founders learn bad news late**

Why It Matters
Silence is the most expensive operational cost.

Investor Move
Ask how bad news reaches leadership—and how fast.

Signal 7: Strategy Language Gets Vague

"Platform," "ecosystem," "AI-enabled" enter the chat.

What You See

- **Broad narratives replacing specific plans**
- **Shifting north stars**
- **Ambition outpacing sequencing**

Why It Matters

Vagueness hides misalignment and postpones trade-offs.

Investor Move

Request one concrete decision the company won't make this year.

Signal 8: Learning Loops Are Breaking

Experiments run, but lessons vanish.

What You See

- **Repeated mistakes with new labels**
- **No documented learnings**

- **Post-mortems skipped "due to pace"**

Why It Matters
Growth without learning is roulette with better marketing.

Investor Move
Ask what failed recently—and what changed because of it.

Signal 9: Capital Is Treated as Oxygen

Instead of a scalpel.

What You See

- **Spend expands before constraints are understood**
- **Fundraising urgency rises despite runway**
- **Capital replaces prioritization**

Why It Matters
Money delays discipline—until it removes it.

Investor Move
Probe milestone logic tied to spend, not ambition.

Signal 10: You're Explaining the Company to Itself

And they're relieved you did.

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What You Feel

- You connect dots for founders
- You justify inconsistencies
- You feel "helpful" more than convinced

Why It Matters

Conviction fades when investors become internal interpreters.

Investor Move

Pause. This is the earliest—and most reliable—warning.

The Pattern Investors Learn Too Late

> Early warning signals don't demand exits.
> They demand attention.

Ignoring them doesn't preserve upside.
It compresses decision time later.

How Investors Should Use This Resource

- During post-traction, pre-scale conversations
- As a board-level sensing checklist

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- To decide *where* to lean in—and *where* to slow down

Designed for the Free Resources section:

- Non-alarmist
- Pattern-driven
- Judgment-first
- Hype-resistant

Final Investor Line (Worth Remembering)

> By the time a problem is obvious,
> it's already expensive.

The best investors don't predict failure.
They notice drift early—and act calmly.

If you'd like next, I can:

- Turn this into a Board Early-Warning Dashboard
- Create a Growth-Stage Risk Map
- Or design a "Lean-In vs Step-Back" decision guide

Because in investing,
timing isn't luck—it's listening.