

FRICTION

SYSTEMIC Add Friction Back In

The Experiment: Friction Restoration

Duration: One focused session plus a two-week experiment

Time required: 40 minutes upfront, 5 minutes per day during the experiment, 15 minutes to evaluate at the end

Goal: Deliberately reintroduce one removed friction and spend two weeks learning what it was doing for you.

Step One: Map Your Current Friction Landscape (15 Minutes)

Think about the recurring tasks, interactions, and decisions in your work. Write your answers plainly:

- Where have you (or your team) recently added speed, automation, or AI assistance?

- Which of those changes felt like a relief? Which felt like something was lost?

- Where do you notice the quality of your thinking, relationships, or judgment mattering most?

Now write down three areas where friction reduction may be costing you something, even if it is hard to name exactly what. Examples: "I use AI to draft responses to my team and the conversations feel thinner." "We automated our approval process and I've lost visibility into why decisions are being made." "I haven't written out my own thinking on a hard problem in months."

Step Two: Identify Your Friction Candidates (15 Minutes)

For each of the three areas you named, ask:

- What was the human activity that got removed or accelerated here?

- What judgment, reflection, or relational quality depended on that activity?

- What is the cost if that capability atrophies over time?

Choose one area where adding friction back in seems most valuable. This is your experiment.

Step Three: Design Your Friction Intervention (10 Minutes)

Design a small, specific change you can make for the next two weeks. Keep it simple enough to actually do. Examples:

- Write one paragraph of your own thinking before opening an AI tool on any significant problem.
- Reinstate a weekly 30-minute conversation with a direct report that you had replaced with a shared document or dashboard.
- Add a 24-hour pause before finalizing any decision your team has been making on autopilot.
- Hand-write notes in your next three one-on-ones instead of typing.

Write down exactly what you will do, when you will do it, and how you will know if it is working.

Step Four: Run the Experiment (Two Weeks)

Do the thing. Each day, take five minutes to note:

- Did I do it? What did I notice?

- What felt uncomfortable, and what felt valuable?

Discomfort and value often arrive together. That is the point.

Step Five: Evaluate and Decide (15 Minutes at the End of Week Two)

Look back at your notes and ask:

- What did I notice about my thinking, my relationships, or my judgment during this period?

- What would I have missed if I had kept the friction removed?

- Is this a friction worth keeping permanently, or was it useful to revisit and then release?

Not every friction is worth restoring. The goal is not to make things harder for its own sake. It is to be intentional about where difficulty is doing something useful.

Reflection prompt:

Where in your work have you optimized for speed without asking what the speed is costing you? Name one human capability, yours or your team's, that may be quietly atrophying. What is one friction you will protect this week, and one you will consciously choose to keep removed?