

FRICTION

SYSTEMIC

Make the Right Things Easy

The Experiment: The Friction Audit

Duration: One week

Time required: 30 minutes for the audit, 10 minutes daily for observation

Goal: This experiment asks you to map the friction landscape of your working environment. The goal is to surface the gap between the behaviors you want and the behaviors the environment is set up to produce.

Step One: The Two-Column Map

In the Easy column, list every recurring behavior, action, or decision in your team or organization that currently requires minimal effort. Do not filter for whether these things are good or bad, just list what the path of least resistance actually produces. Some examples to prompt your thinking include the following:

- Adding people to meetings; Sending status update emails; Creating new Slack channels; Launching new workstreams; Requesting someone's time; Generating decks; Approving small expenditures; Saying yes to requests

In the Hard column, list the behaviors that your team or organization genuinely values but that currently require significant effort, coordination, or willpower to execute. Again, be honest rather than aspirational. Some prompts include the following:

- Protecting two uninterrupted hours for deep work; Canceling a meeting that has outlived its purpose; Saying no to a low-priority request; Getting a decision made without a meeting; Finishing one priority before starting another; Documenting a decision so it does not need to be re-litigated.

HARD

EASY

Step Two: The Inversion Question

Look at both columns and ask: Which items in the Hard column should be easy, and which items in the Easy column should be harder or should not exist at all?



This is the diagnostic at the heart of the audit; you are looking for the highest-leverage misalignments and the places where the environment is most actively working against the outcomes you care about.

Circle no more than three items: one from the Easy column that should be harder or eliminated, and one or two from the Hard column that should be easier or protected by design.

Step Three: One Design Decision

For each circled item, ask: What is the smallest structural change that would shift this?

Some examples of what this can look like in practice include the following:

- Blocking the first 90 minutes of every workday on the team calendar so meetings cannot be scheduled during that window
- Requiring anyone who calls a meeting to state the decision that will be made in it
- Removing yourself from distribution lists that do not require your action
- Setting a recurring meeting to biweekly instead of weekly and seeing if anything breaks

The difference between a cultural aspiration and a mise en place intervention is that the aspiration requires people to remember to do the right thing, while the intervention makes the right thing the thing that happens by default.