

FRICTION

SYSTEMIC

The Unsent Resignation Letter

The Experiment: Run an Unsent Resignation Letter Audit

Duration: One session plus two-week follow-up

Time required: 15 minutes for individual writing, 60–90 minutes for team synthesis

Goal: Surface hidden frictions (inner, interpersonal, systemic), then separate what needs policy/process change from what needs team/manager intervention.

Step One: Create Real Psychological Safety

- Put in writing: no retaliation, no “performance consequences,” no “who said this” hunting.
- Offer two paths: private letter (for self) and shareable letter (for the organization).
- If trust is low, use a neutral facilitator to collect letters and produce a de-identified theme report. (Don’t skip this if people are scared.)

Step Two: The Prompt (10–15 Minutes)

Ask people to write two letters:

Letter A: “If I Resigned in Six Months . . .”

Finish these sentences:

- “I’d be leaving because . . .”
- “I’ve tried to address this by . . .”
- “The moment I realized it wasn’t sustainable was . . .”
- “The part I don’t say out loud is . . .”
- “If nothing changes, the cost to me will be . . .”

Letter B: “If I Chose to Stay . . .”

Finish these sentences:

- “I stay when . . .”
- “The best version of me at work looks like . . .”
- “The smallest change that would make the biggest difference is . . .”
- “A boundary I need respected is . . .”
- “A policy/process that quietly makes things harder is . . .”
- “I don’t want to leave the company. I want to stop becoming _____ here.”

Step Three: Individual Reflection (Make the Invisible Visible to the Person)

Have each person label their friction in three buckets:

- **Internal:** energy, meaning, identity, values, capacity
- **Interpersonal:** trust, conflict, communication, fairness, respect
- **Systemic:** workload design, tools, meeting norms, policies, incentives, staffing, decision rights

Then ask: “What part is mine to own?” and “What part is the system’s to fix?”

Step Four: Organizational Synthesis (Make the Invisible Visible to the System)

Leaders (or the facilitator) code themes into:

- **Policy/process fixes** (e.g., meeting load, unclear priorities, unclear decision rights, staffing math, inequitable flexibility)
- **Manager enablement needs** (coaching, role clarity, feedback routines, conflict support)
- **Team norm repairs** (how decisions happen, how conflict happens, how work is handed off)

Step Five: Close the Loop in 14 Days

Within two weeks, publish:

- **Top three themes you heard**

- **1-2 changes you will make now**

- **One longer-term change you will evaluate**

- **What you are not changing and why (this builds trust; ambiguity destroys it)**

Step Six: Repeat Quarterly (Because Systems Drift)

System friction isn't solved once. It's managed. Schedule it like maintenance.