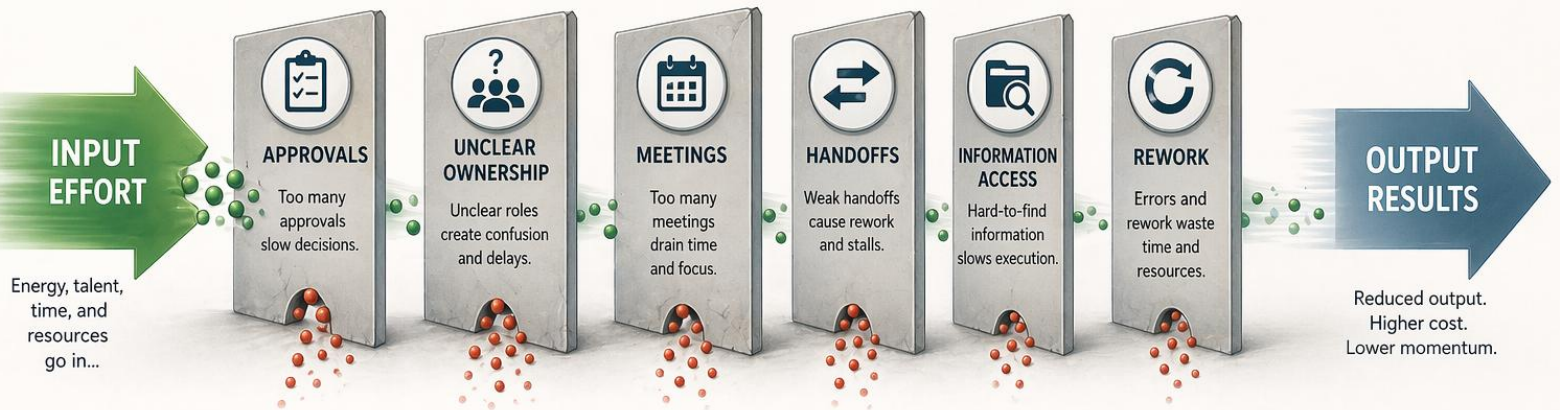


THE HIDDEN FRICTION TAX

Small barriers. Big impact.

Friction slows work, increases cost, and reduces results.

Find it. Remove it. Restore momentum.



*You can't always add your way to better results.
You can remove what's in the way.*

The Friction Audit

**A Practical Guide to Identifying Hidden Drag
and Restoring Momentum**

Brought to you by:



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Many organizations attempt to improve performance by increasing effort, adding meetings, tightening controls, or introducing new tools. In some cases, those actions are helpful. In many others, progress is slowed by a different issue entirely: unnecessary friction already present within the system.

Friction is the resistance that makes ordinary work harder, slower, or more complicated than it should be. It often appears in subtle forms such as delayed decisions, unclear ownership, weak handoffs, excessive approvals, recurring rework, poor information access, or meetings that consume time without creating sufficient value.

Because these issues are usually dispersed across normal daily activity, they are often accepted as “just how work happens.” Over time, however, their cumulative effect can become substantial.

This workbook is designed to help you:

- Identify hidden friction within your team, department, or organization
- Understand where that friction is creating the greatest drag
- Use AI thoughtfully as a thinking partner to surface ideas and blind spots
- Select one meaningful barrier to improve over the next 30 days
- Build momentum through practical simplification rather than added complexity

You do not need to solve everything at once. In many cases, one well-chosen improvement creates visible momentum and opens the door to further gains.

Understanding Friction

What Friction Often Looks Like

Friction is not usually dramatic. It often presents itself through recurring patterns such as:

- Capable people are busy, yet progress feels modest
- Decisions require multiple cycles before action occurs
- Team members are unsure who owns the next step
- Meetings consume time but produce limited movement
- Work slows between departments or shifts
- Information takes too long to locate
- The same issues require repeated correction
- Strong performers seem frustrated or fatigued
- Leaders feel they are pushing harder than results suggest they should need to

If several of these sound familiar, friction may be present.

An Important Leadership Principle

Friction is often a system issue before it is a people issue.

That does not mean people never need coaching, accountability, or development. It means leaders should be cautious about blaming individuals for problems that are largely created by unclear processes, weak structures, or avoidable complexity.

Before asking people to work harder, it is often wise to ask whether the system could work better.

Friction Signals Assessment

Rate each statement from **1 to 5**:

1 = Rarely True
3 = Sometimes True
5 = Frequently True

Statement

Score

Decisions take longer than they should _____

Ownership of tasks is sometimes unclear _____

Meetings consume time without enough output _____

Work stalls between people or departments _____

Important information is harder to find than should be _____

Rework happens more often than it should _____

Too many approvals are required for routine progress _____

Strong people seem frustrated or tired _____

Priorities move slower than expected _____

Everyone is busy, but progress feels modest _____

Total Score: _____

Interpretation

40–50 = High friction environment. Multiple areas may be creating meaningful drag.
25–39 = Moderate friction. Some recurring barriers likely need attention.
10–24 = Localized friction. Improvement opportunities may be concentrated in specific workflows.

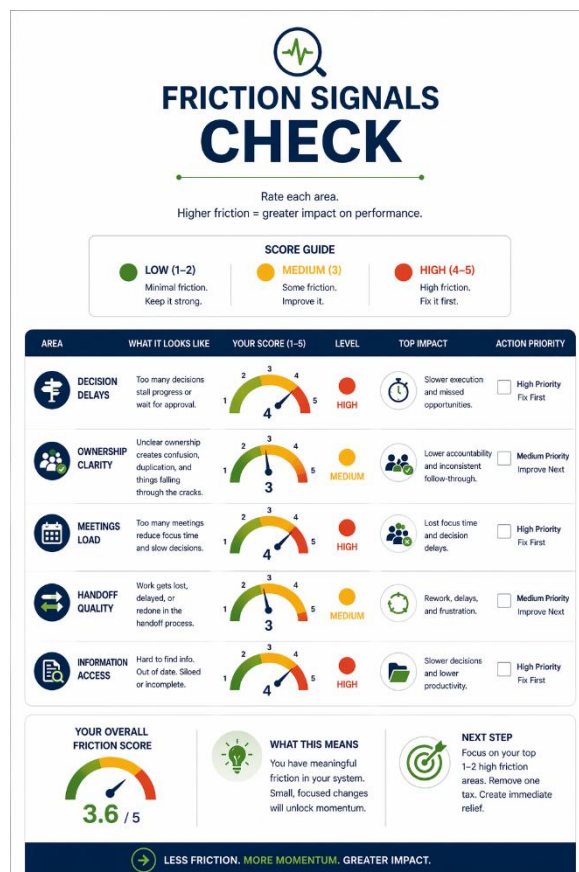
Reflection Questions

- Which three statements scored highest? _____

- Where do you see these most often? _____

- How long have these patterns existed? _____

- Have they become normalized? _____



Friction Mapping

Common Sources of Organizational Friction

Review the list below and select your **top three likely friction sources**.

- Decision Flow
- Ownership Clarity
- Meetings
- Cross-Functional Handoffs
- Information Access
- Reporting Load
- Approval Layers
- Priority Conflict
- Tool / System Complexity
- Staffing or Skill Gaps

For each selected area, complete the exercise below.

Friction Source #1: _____

What happens today? _____

What should happen ideally? _____

What is causing the gap? _____

Friction Source #2: _____

What happens today? _____

What should happen ideally? _____

What is causing the gap? _____

Friction Source #3: _____

What happens today? _____

What should happen ideally? _____

What is causing the gap? _____

AI-Assisted Friction Review

Use AI as a Thinking Partner, Not a Decision Maker

Artificial Intelligence can be useful for identifying possible friction patterns, generating improvement ideas, and helping leaders think more broadly. It should not replace leadership judgment or organizational accountability.

Use AI thoughtfully:

- You remain responsible for decisions and actions
- Do not assume the first response is fully accurate
- Compare suggestions to your real-world context
- Ask follow-up questions to improve usefulness
- Validate before implementing significant changes

The ACT Prompt Framework

A — Actor → Tell AI what expertise to assume.

Pattern: Act as a(n) [expert type] specializing in [expert field 1, expert field 2, expert field 3...].

C — Context → Describe your situation clearly.

Example: I manage a [size and type of team] team in a [industry or discipline]. We have strong people, but [issue 1, issue 2, issue 3...].

T — Task → State exactly what help you want.

Example: Help me identify likely sources of [type of friction] friction, rank them by probable impact, suggest what I should investigate, and recommend three practical improvements with low disruption.

Full Example Prompt

Act as an experienced organizational effectiveness consultant specializing in workflow efficiency, decision flow, and leadership execution.

I manage a 25-person operations team in a growing manufacturing company. We have strong people, but projects move slowly, decisions linger, and too much time is spent in meetings.

Help me identify likely sources of friction, rank them by probable impact, suggest what I should investigate, and recommend three practical improvements with low disruption.

Your Prompt

A: _____

C: _____

T: _____

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Human-in-the-Loop Follow-Up Questions

Never stop at the first response. Continue the conversation. Select an area that you find most relevant and ask additional questions to go deeper.

Examples:

- Which recommendation best fits a manufacturing environment?
- What assumptions are you making?
- What did you possibly overlook?
- Help me evaluate risks of recommendation #2.
- Turn recommendation #1 into a 30-day implementation plan.
- How would a strong operations leader approach this differently?

This is often where the greatest value emerges.

Remove One Tax Plan

Select One Friction Source to Improve in the Next 30 Days

Chosen Issue: _____

Why this issue first? _____

Current Cost (time, delays, morale, customer impact): _____

Likely Root Cause: _____

One Practical Improvement Step: _____

Owner: _____

Start Date: _____

Success Measure (What will improve?): _____

Risks to Success: _____

Support Needed: _____

Sustain Momentum

Monthly Leadership Reflection

Set aside 15–20 minutes at month-end and ask:

1. What became easier this month?
2. Where does friction still remain?
3. What did we stop doing that should stay stopped?
4. What improvement should now be standardized?
5. What is the next friction tax worth removing?

A Practical Reminder

Leaders often seek progress through addition:

- more reports
- more meetings
- more controls
- more tools
- more urgency

Sometimes progress accelerates through subtraction:

- one less bottleneck
- one clearer owner
- one simpler handoff
- one faster decision path
- one outdated activity removed



Closing Thought

Many organizations assume better results require more pressure, more activity, or more complexity. Sometimes the opposite is true.

When capable people are given clearer pathways, faster decisions, cleaner handoffs, and fewer unnecessary obstacles, performance often rises naturally.

The next level of progress may not come from asking your team to give more.

It may come from finally allowing them to move more freely.