

STRUCTURAL CLARITY · FIELD GUIDE #1

Is This Really a People Problem?

A quick diagnostic for identifying hidden structural
causes behind stuck work.

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Most organizations diagnose the visible symptom.

- The project is behind.
- The meeting keeps recurring.
- The same person gets pulled into everything.
- People seem frustrated.

The usual explanation is:

"We need better communication."

"People need more accountability."

"Someone needs to step up."

Sometimes that's true.

Often it isn't.

Before assuming the problem is the people,
ask a different question:

What structure is producing this result?

The next page gives you five questions to help you find out.

THE STRUCTURAL CLARITY QUICK CHECK

If you answer "yes" to two or more of these questions, you may be looking at a structural problem rather than a people problem.

1. Does work slow down when one specific person is unavailable?

Vacation. Sick day. Meeting conflict. If so, knowledge or authority may be concentrated in one person.

2. Do the same discussions happen repeatedly?

If the meeting keeps returning, the issue may not be communication. It may be unclear decision ownership.

3. Are people working hard without visible progress?

High activity. Low movement. Often a sign that priorities, dependencies, or decisions are unclear.

4. Do different people leave the same conversation with different understandings?

This can signal missing decision clarity rather than missing communication.

5. Do people regularly ask: "Who owns this?"

Ownership confusion is usually structural.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR NEXT

Instead of asking:

Who is causing the problem?

Try asking:

What would have to be true for this pattern to keep happening?

That question often reveals:

- hidden dependencies
- decision bottlenecks
- ownership gaps
- visibility problems
- structural debt

The goal is not to assign blame.

The goal is to make the structure visible.

CONTINUE THE INVESTIGATION

If this guide was useful, you may enjoy:

Structural Clarity Investigations

Short investigations into why good teams, good projects,
and good organizations get stuck.

- Hero Operators
- Meeting Substitution
- Dependency Concentration
- Decision Bottlenecks
- Invisible Ownership

structuralclarity.substack.com

Someone reads this and thinks:

**"Wait a minute. Maybe this isn't the people I need to investigate.
Maybe it's the structure."**

That's the first Structural Clarity win.