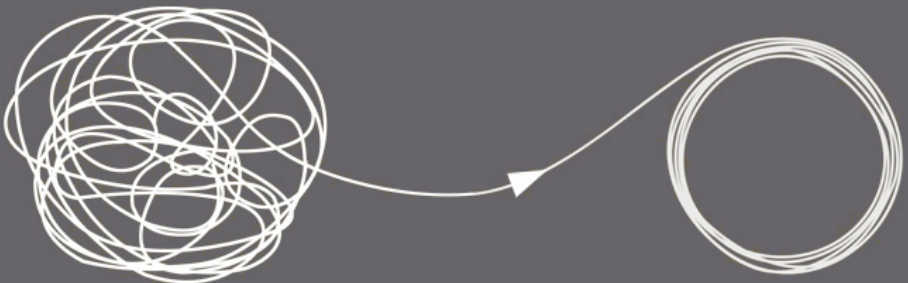


# THE CLARITY RESET

Busy team, no progress?  
Here's your solution.



# Acknowledgements

**We want to thank the wonderful Geesje Moosies for tirelessly reading and editing the manuscript and for pushing and inspiring us to get this book done. We are more grateful than words can express.**

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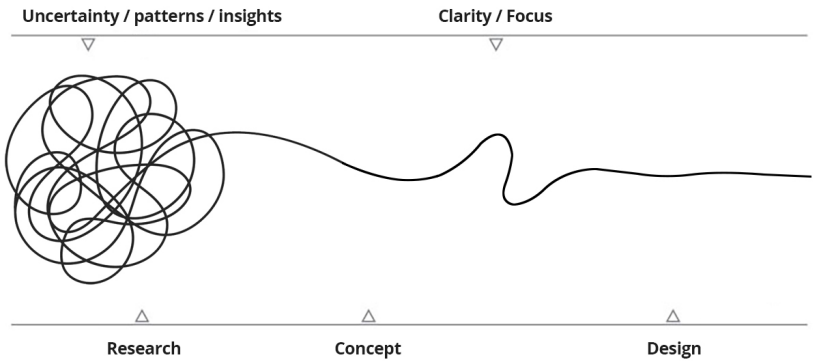
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# FIELDWORK

## S T U D I O

From chaos to clarity: mastering systemic insight



Based on 'The process of Design Squiggle' by Damien Newman

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## Preface: The collapse of clarity: why it matters now

*"Most small teams don't design for clarity; they stumble into growth, and then scramble to make it fit. By the time things feel off, the system's already misaligned. That's where we come in."*

- Fieldwork Studio

**If you've ever felt overwhelmed by complexity, or noticed productivity quietly slipping away despite hard work, this guide is for you.**

Almost everywhere we read that AI is coming for your job. *My job*. That soon, entire industries will collapse. That within five years, most people will be irrelevant due to 'AI' taking over.

I think they're at least partially right.

We're entering a moment of profound structural shift. For decades, knowledge workers have built careers and identities around stable job titles, clear roles, and predictable hierarchies. Today, these structures are quietly collapsing, not just changing, but vanishing. AI isn't simply automating tasks; it's accelerating a deeper disruption: the collapse of clarity.

Sure, most entry-level white collar jobs will have been replaced by AI within a few years, but there is much more to a fulfilling and sustainable career than repetitive tasks and data processing, which is what AI will mostly replace.

Human creativity, judgment, emotional intelligence, and the ability to navigate complex social systems remain uniquely ours. The future of work will be less about machines replacing people and more about how people and AI collaborate, amplifying our strengths while reshaping what meaningful work looks like.

Not that AI won't change everything. It definitely will. Heck, it already has. Tasks are vanishing. Fears are rising. What used to take a whole team to accomplish now takes a tool. But the real disruption isn't job loss alone, it's

identity loss, decision fatigue, and structural chaos.

Teams that once thrived by knowing exactly where they stood now find themselves caught in the friction between rapidly automated workflows and unclear human roles. Decisions happen faster but make less sense. Tools multiply, yet productivity stalls. Teams drift quietly into confusion, and no one knows precisely why.

**And that's where the Fieldwork Method lives:**

At the intersection of human insight and digital systems. Where things break, we listen. Where things tangle, we trace. Where things stall, we realign.

This book is not about theory. It's a field guide for anyone who feels the shift, the invisible drag, the quiet panic beneath the productivity.

It's for leaders, operators, and builders who know the future isn't just faster. It's much more complex and clarity is the only way through.

Clarity isn't just about feeling better, it's about making decisions faster, reducing costly mistakes, and creating a team that can thrive in complexity without burning out.

Fieldwork Studio creates clarity by mapping employee journeys to find real workflows, problems, and friction in the organisation. We then turn these insights into a clear and useful Clarity Blueprint that helps teams, processes, and tools work better together.

If you sense the invisible drag, the quiet panic beneath productivity, this field guide is your intervention. Because the future isn't just faster, it demands clarity more urgently than ever.

## What you'll find inside

### When workarounds become the work

In just a few years, AI and new technologies have reshaped the way we work faster than most organisations can keep up. What once was clear and defined, has blurred: roles fragment, processes tangle. Teams opt out and make their own rules. This shift is fast and unsettling.

In this book, we tackle the urgent questions every (team)leader and operator faces today:

- What does it mean to be *digitally fit* in a world overflowing with tools and noise?
- How can teams adapt calmly without succumbing to *chaos and burnout*?
- What mindset, culture, and practical skills are essential for *thriving in this complexity*?

The Fieldwork Method® is a grounded, human-centred approach that combines AI-powered insight with the proven clarity of the *Double Diamond model*. It helps you diagnose where your systems break down and guides you to rebuild workflows and teams that flex with real life, not rigid theory.

For a long time, work felt simple and progress felt certain. *Now, clarity is scarce and complexity reigns*. The promise of new tools has revealed hidden fractures and created confusion.

This book is a practical guide to breaking free from that trap. You'll learn how to uncover unseen friction and create lasting purposeful alignment.

## Why Fieldwork Studio exists

In today's fast-moving world, companies are flooded with new software tools, often chosen by leaders or external forces, *not* by the teams using them day-to-day. And that's a problem.

While these tools promise efficiency and progress, many employees struggle to keep up. The result? Tool fatigue and workarounds, that undermine productivity.

But the problem isn't the tools themselves. It lies deeper. In how these tools often misalign with actual workflows, roles, and the ways people naturally work together. This misalignment creates decision fatigue, and silent resistance. Official software gets sidelined, replaced by informal, inefficient shortcuts that nobody talks about. Until the person maintaining this workaround leaves.

Fieldwork Studio was born to address this exact challenge. Our mission is to uncover these hidden frictions and realign tools, processes, and roles to fit the team's real needs, without politics.

This way, we help teams regain what they need most: clarity and lasting cohesion to thrive in complexity.

## The Fieldwork Method®

Change means making a real shift in how work flows and how people work together. It is not just about adding new tools or processes. It is about understanding how your team actually works and adjusting systems to match that reality, not just following theory.

The Fieldwork Method® is built for this purpose. It is a practical, people-focused way to clear up complexity and bring clarity where confusion has grown.

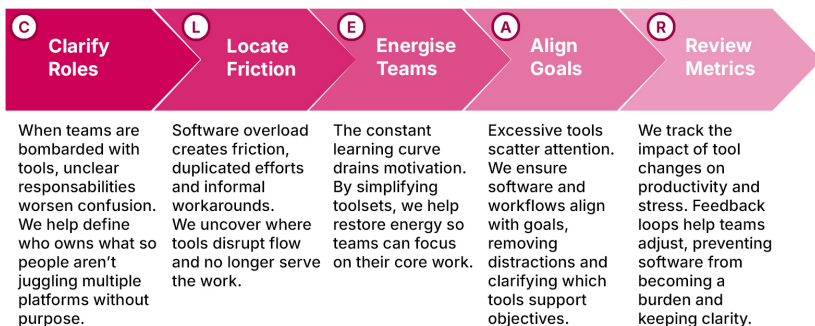
Through five C.L.E.A.R. steps, you'll learn how to:

- › **C**larify roles and responsibilities to remove confusion and speed up decisions
- › **L**ocate friction points and hidden blockers slowing your team down
- › **E**nergise the team by reducing frustration and rebuilding motivation
- › **A**lign goals, actions, and communication to move forward together
- › **R**eview key metrics to track progress and catch early warning signs

This method is **not** a one-time fix. It's a living framework that evolves with your team, helping you adapt calmly and confidently in a fast-changing world.

Ready to get started? Let's dive in.

### The 5-step C.L.E.A.R. method: Mastering alignment for lasting clarity



*PART 1: Why clarity breaks*

# The illusion of progress

*Understanding the roots of misalignment.*



## 1.0 The illusion of progress

*In Part 1, we'll see why clarity breaks, and what digital fitness really means.*

On paper, things look fine. There are plans, tools, and clear deadlines. Tasks get done.

But under the surface, something is wrong. People feel tired. Confusion starts to grow. Frustration builds up. Talks go in circles about the same problems. Priorities change without warning. The work continues, but nobody feels in control.

This is the illusion of progress. It's when we see a lot of action, but the real problems stay hidden. There's no single moment when it all goes wrong. Instead, small signs are missed, friction is ignored, and quick decisions add up. New tools get added. Deadlines are moved. Meetings turn into emails. Weeks blur together. What once felt clear now just feels busy.

While this part is about observing and understanding what's going wrong, the Fieldwork Method® itself begins with clarifying roles: the first step in turning insight into action. Think of observation here as the stance or lens you adopt first. It prepares you before stepping into the structured C.L.E.A.R. process that guides you through practical clarity. We enter your team quietly, acting like a fly on the wall and watch how work really flows, capturing each detail to spot where energy is lost and where noise drowns out clarity.

Studies back this up. When people switch between tools, conversations, and tasks, they lose focus and energy. McKinsey says workers spend up to 20% of their time just looking for information they need to do their jobs. Some estimates suggest people switch apps over **1,100 times per day**. Microsoft shows that this overload leads to stress and tiredness.

So, even when the tools seem to work, the organisation may not. Everything looks fine on the surface, so no one notices the problem. Because when surface-level-metrics look good, no alarms are raised.

Teams absorb 'the noise' while leaders assume that silence means everything is fine.

### Three signs you are trapped in the illusion of progress

- Deadlines are met, but progress slows down.
- Meetings take place, but choices are not followed through.
- Everyone seems busy, but results are weak.

### Try this next

- Pause and look beneath the surface.
- Ask yourself: "Where is our energy being lost?"
- List what helps the team, and what drains it.

### Name the illusion

- Say out loud: "We're busy, not with work, but with ..."
- Once you see the problem, you can start to fix it and move toward real clarity.

### A note for leaders

- Leaders must look past the easy numbers and ask tough questions.
- If you ignore early warning signs, things get worse and people lose motivation.
- Clarity begins when leaders are brave enough to face hard truths.



### Dig deeper

The illusion of progress is a common problem in teams and organisations:

- McKinsey's report titled "*The productivity imperative in 2024*" including the challenges business leaders face in increasing productivity, including issues related to tool switching.
- Atlassian's article "*5 diagrams that show how context switching saps your productivity, 2021*" highlights research indicating that frequent switching between apps can significantly reduce productivity.
- Microsoft's "*Work Trend Index*" report from March 2021 addresses the rise in digital overload, linking it to increased stress and tiredness among employees.

## 1.1 The hidden cost of 'okay'

**There is no crisis.** Your organisation and its employees seem fine. It works, but at a hidden cost.

Teams don't fall apart; they find ways to cope.

Extra steps and workarounds pile up. People stay polite, even when they're frustrated. Work gets done and things are delivered. From the outside, everything seems fine.

But "just fine" can be expensive. Energy drains, trust erodes and morale drops.

You might notice:

- Tools that no one fully understands, (but no one wants to admit it.)
- Decisions that only some agree on, (just to keep moving forward.)
- Meetings where people nod, (but nothing is really clear.)
- People rewrite messages to avoid conflict.

Tension builds. People show up, but they have silently resigned. Friction grows, but it's hard to say why.

It's not broken tools or bad intent, it's stress that's become normal.

When "good enough" is the standard, warning signs get missed:

- People avoid tasks, not out of laziness, but to protect themselves.
- Small problems are patched up, not really fixed.
- Giving feedback feels risky, so misunderstandings quietly pile up.
- The team's feeling that something's wrong gets ignored so the work keeps moving.

The invisible cost of "okay" becomes embedded in the team's culture. Until someone finally asks, "Why are we all so tired?" the answer isn't "too much work." It's misalignment; different goals, beliefs, and expectations. Everyone

is working hard, but few are clear on what they're really meant to achieve, or how their tools are supposed to help them get there.

Clarity is more than just speed or ease, it's the renewed energy and focus you gain when problems are openly addressed and resolved.

### Three signs your team is settling for 'okay'

- Decisions made with only part of the team agreeing. "We say 'yes' just to move forward."
- Politeness hiding real frustration.
- We have the same meetings over and over with no clear results.

### What to try next

- Ask, "What small trade-offs are making things harder?"
- Invite honest talks about what isn't working.
- Watch for patterns where feedback is watered down, tough conversations are postponed, or problems are quietly patched instead of openly discussed.

### Calculate the cost

Say out loud: *"This 'okay' is draining us more than we realise."*

Noticing the hidden cost is the first step to getting back lost energy and trust.

### Leadership note

- Leaders need to create space for honest talk and help teams speak up about problems.
- If you ignore these signs, stress will become normal and people will lose interest.
- Open leadership builds trust and brings energy back.

## Read more

The hidden cost of “okay” is a big topic in workplace psychology and management. Here are four sources showing the true price teams pay when “okay” becomes the default:

1. Gallup. (2023). *State of the Global Workplace*. [gallup.com](https://www.gallup.com)  
This report finds that only about 1 in 5 employees worldwide feel truly engaged at work and that many struggle with their wellbeing. The report highlights that companies need to focus more on keeping employees connected and supported to succeed long-term.
2. Modo Labs. (2022). *The Cost of Bad Teamwork*. [modolabs.com/resources](https://modolabs.com/resources)  
Poor teamwork wastes time, lowers productivity, and drains morale. It leads to miscommunication, duplicated work, and missed deadlines. The report shows companies lose billions annually due to ineffective collaboration. Investing in better team dynamics and communication tools can save money and boost performance.
3. Meahana. (2021). *Workplace Alignment Report*. [meahana.com](https://meahana.com)  
This report highlights that when teams are aligned around shared goals and values, they perform better and feel more engaged. Misalignment causes confusion, slows decisions, and increases stress. Clear communication and leadership are key to fostering alignment, which drives productivity and employee satisfaction.
4. Project Management Institute. (2021). *Pulse of the Profession*. [pmi.org](https://pmi.org)  
The report shows that organisations with strong project management practices deliver better results and meet goals more consistently. Poor project management leads to missed deadlines, budget overruns, and wasted resources. Investing in skilled project managers and standardised processes improves success rates and organisational performance.

## 1.2 Why "okay" is so costly

*"Don't confuse activity with productivity." — R. Sharma, The monk who sold his Ferrari, 2006*

Misalignment doesn't shout. It whispers.

Teams and organisations don't fall apart in one day. Problems build slowly: missed details, handovers that go wrong, and things left unsaid. Silos create isolated tools that are not connected leading to even more noise.

Over time it creeps into team dynamics and erodes cohesion. It starts with subtle signs such as:

- Designers making changes that developers never heard about.
- Product owners shifting goals without meaning to.
- Departments choosing their own tools, alone.

**It shows up as noise:**

1. Repeated explanations, redone tasks, and shifting deadlines.
2. Everyone tries to do their job, but the system breaks down.
3. People don't get burned out right away. They adapt and start working harder to keep things going, slowly burning out over time.

But research shows that teams with strong unity have less stress, clearer talks, and better results.<sup>1</sup> Not because they work more, but because they don't waste energy fixing hidden problems and miscommunication.

**Three signs your team is losing unity**

- The same misunderstandings happen, but nobody says anything.
- People use side-steps and shortcuts instead of the main process.
- Frustration is hidden under "busy work."

### Try this next

- Look for the small problems that others miss.
- Ask: "What things are we not saying out loud?"
- Check if documents, goals, or steps don't match how things really work.
- Watch for extra work: late nights, checking everything twice, or quietly "just fixing it."

### Name the friction

Say out loud: "We're working hard, but not together."

Real unity means everyone knows not just what to do, but why and how it fits together.

When unity breaks, people stop looking up, they just do their own part. That's when clarity fades.

### Leadership note

Leaders need to create a shared sense of purpose and keep communication open. Without this, unity fades quietly over time.

Good leaders notice these early signs and help the team realign before the problems get worse.

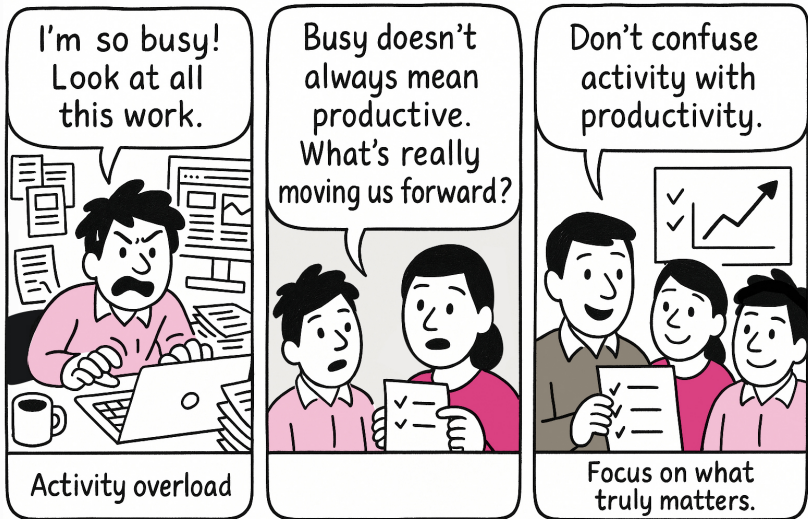
### Rich reading

As team researchers have shown, cohesion is more than just harmony; it is the result of shared meaning and genuine connection among team members. The following authors show why unity is fragile yet essential, and how fixing team cracks saves energy and leads to better results:

1. Salas, Sims, & Burke (2005). Is there a "Big Five" in Teamwork? Small Group Research <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496405277134>

In this article Salas, Sims, and Burke's show that united teams feel less stress and work better.

2. In her 2018 book, "The Fearless Organization", Amy Edmondson shows that psychological safety helps teams talk about problems and stay connected.
3. Patrick Lencioni explains how lack of trust and unclear roles can break teams apart in his classic book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Even though the book was published in 2002, it remains relevant to this day.



## 1.3 When the lack of clarity becomes noise

*"Small leaks can sink a great ship." — Benjamin Franklin*

Change should lead to growth.

**Good intentions pile up:**

- New project tracking systems.
- Streamlined collaboration tools.
- Fresh KPIs.

All meant to push us forward, enabling us to work faster, with more ease and at the same time achieve better results. But for many teams, constant change feels exhausting.

**Good intentions pile up:**

- New project tracking systems.
- Streamlined collaboration tools.
- Fresh KPIs.

Gartner research links frequent unmanaged change to *fatigue, uncertainty, and lower productivity*.<sup>1</sup>

Prosci shows poorly managed change spikes confusion and resistance.<sup>2</sup>

When no one knows where to find information, multiple tools cover the same task, and processes change mid-project. That's when clarity gives way to confusion and momentum turns into resistance.

It's not "too much change." It's *unabsorbed change*.

---

1. Gartner - Change Fatigue & Productivity  
Gartner, Inc. (2020). *Change Fatigue: 5 Principles for Supporting Employees Through Organizational Change*.

2. Prosci. (2021).  
*Best Practices in Change Management – 12th Edition*.



Clarity isn't absence of change. It's a stable anchor for change to align with. It leads to meaningful change, improving the way we learn and work with new technologies. Without it, even the best plans dissolve into fog.

### **Three signs your team's cohesion is cracking**

- Constant shifts in priorities without clear communication.
- Multiple overlapping tools causing confusion.
- Repetitive frustration over "process changes" mid-project.

### **Try this next:**

- Map the change landscape  
What's new, what's overlapping, what's causing friction.
- Create clear communication rhythms to surface change impact early.
- Pause regularly to ask:

"Are we absorbing this change, or just adding noise?"

## **Leadership role**

Leaders set the tone and direction, often before they say a single word. In every team I've worked with, the gradual loss of clarity, focus, or trust begins with small things: a decision postponed, a minor issue swept aside, or a workaround nobody questions. At first, these seem harmless. But when leaders tolerate patchwork fixes or avoid the difficult conversations, those small cracks spread quickly. Before long, confusion and frustration have become the norm.

I worked at a bank where it was a habit to call out problems early and openly even if it felt uncomfortable. This openness created a culture where everyone felt safe to raise concerns and fix issues before they grew.

Leading with transparency and purpose gives teams the anchor they need in turbulent times. When leaders show up honestly and consistently, they make it possible for everyone to face change together, turning uncertainty into momentum.

## 1.4 The cost of misalignment. Why clarity pays off

Studies show that hidden friction, unclear roles, and fractured communication drain productivity, increase turnover, and delay project delivery. For example:

- Gallup estimates that disengaged employees cost the global economy up to \$8 trillion annually.<sup>1</sup>
- Research from McKinsey shows knowledge workers spend up to 20% of their time searching for information or switching between tools.<sup>2</sup>
- A Harvard Business Review study revealed that misaligned teams waste 30% of their time on redundant work and rework.<sup>3</sup>

### What does this mean for your organisation?

Even a small misalignment can cost thousands per employee each year. Multiply this across teams and departments, and the price escalates fast.

### Real impact: Case study snapshots

- Research and industry reports consistently show that improving clarity and alignment leads to significant gains in productivity, cost savings, and employee retention:
- A mid-sized software company reduced rework by up to 40% after clarifying roles and workflows, translating to savings of over €300,000 annually in labour costs.<sup>4</sup>

---

1. McKinsey & Company,  
*The productivity imperative in 2024 (2024)*

2. Deloitte Insights,  
*The future of work: Aligning collaboration and efficiency (2022)*

3. Gallup, State of the Global Workplace (2023)  
*Employee engagement and turnover reduction linked to team clarity and safety.*

4. Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017).  
*Psychological Safety: A Meta-Analytic Review and Extension. Personnel Psychology*,  
70(1), 113–165.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183>

- A financial services firm cut project delivery times by 25% by uncovering hidden blockers and realigning communication flows.<sup>1</sup>
- Organisations that improved team clarity and psychological safety experienced up to 15% lower turnover rates, reducing recruitment and training costs.<sup>2</sup>

## Calculating your “Clarity Debt”

You can estimate your organisation's cost of misalignment by considering:

- Average employee salary × % time lost to friction
- Cost of delays in project delivery
- Turnover costs due to burnout and frustration
- Wasted spend on unused or duplicated tools

Taking time to map and measure these areas shines a light on “clarity debt”, the silent drag on your growth and resilience.

## When can you expect to see results?

Clarity work isn't an overnight fix, but:

- Quick wins often show in 4–8 weeks (e.g., less time wasted on unclear tasks, fewer crossed wires in communication and more focus in meetings and decision-making).
- Medium-term impact on morale and productivity unfolds over 3–6 months.
- Long-term cultural change builds momentum and resilience beyond a year.

Investing in clarity now prevents bigger costs later.

The question is: **can you afford to wait?**

---

1. Gartner – Change Fatigue & Productivity  
 Gartner, Inc. (2020). *Change Fatigue: 5 Principles for Supporting Employees Through Organizational Change*.  
<https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/change-fatigue-5-principles-for-supporting-employees-through-organizational-change>

2. Prosci. (2021).  
*Best Practices in Change Management – 12th Edition*.  
<https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-management-best-practices>

# Top 5 actionable takeaways

## Part I: Why clarity breaks

Here are the key actions from this part to help you move from insight to impact.

➤ **Don't mistake busyness for progress.**

*Look beyond what's visible on the surface. Track not just how much work is done but how meaningful the output is. Watch for signs like missed decisions in meetings, or repeated discussions with no resolution. Ask: Are we actually moving forward or just keeping busy?*

➤ **Identify where energy leaks.**

*Observe when momentum slows or frustration rises. This could be in duplicated efforts, unclear handoffs, or bottlenecks in communication. Document these areas and prioritise them for discussion.*

➤ **Encourage honest conversations.**

*Create safe spaces for your team to speak openly about pain points without fear of judgment. Use anonymous surveys, one-on-one check-ins, or facilitated workshops to surface hidden tensions.*

➤ **Spot early signs of team drift**

*Look for patterns like stalled progress, meetings that repeat without outcomes, and busy work that doesn't contribute to goals. Recognising these early can help avoid bigger problems down the line.*

➤ **Lead with courage.**

*Be willing to ask difficult questions and address uncomfortable truths. Frame these as opportunities for growth rather than criticism. Model openness yourself to encourage others.*

**Try this next:**

Pause and list what drains your team's energy and what fuels it.

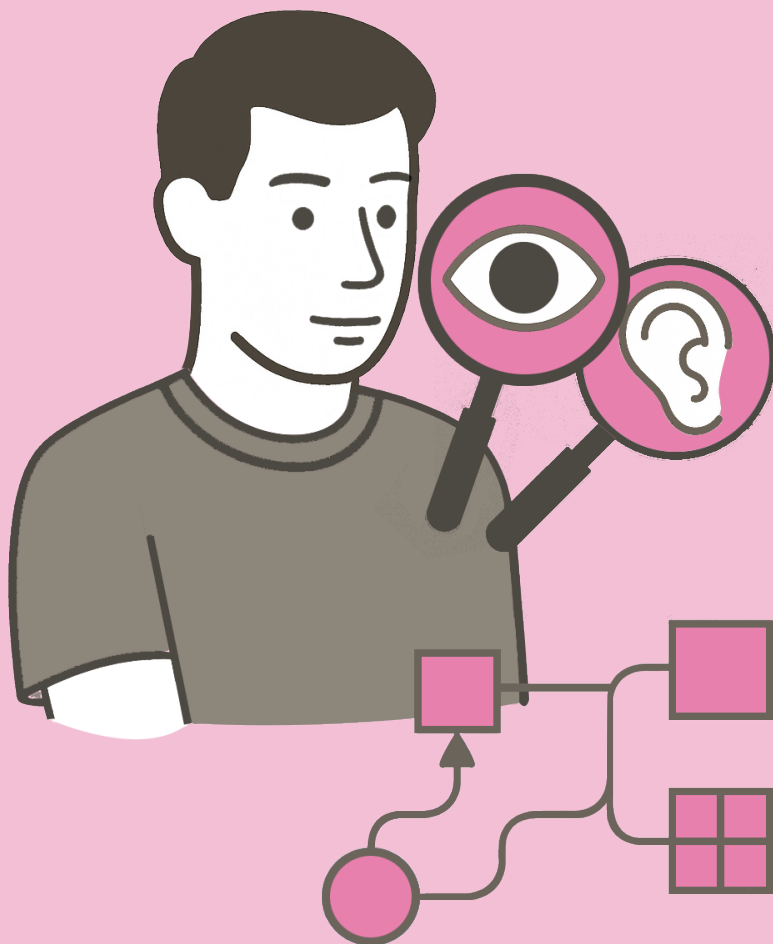
Name out loud, "We're busy, but not progressing." That simple act helps start the shift.



*PART 2: How to achieve clarity*

# Observing like an outsider

*The quiet method, built in the field.*

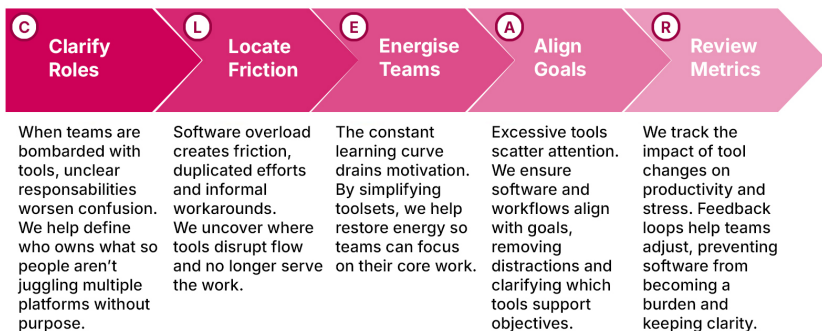


## 2.0 Observing like an outsider

*In Part 2, we'll explore how to adapt calmly, without chaos, using the Fieldwork Method.*

As you step back and observe the patterns beneath your team's daily work, remember that clarifying roles and locating friction are your essential first moves. These reveal where *motivation flags and culture strains under pressure*. Spotting those silent workarounds and unspoken rules uncovers the true dynamics in play; insights that prepare you to energise your team and align their efforts in the next steps of the C.L.E.A.R. method.

### The 5-step C.L.E.A.R. method: Mastering alignment for lasting clarity



The clearest signs of dysfunction are often invisible to those living with them. Inside teams, patterns calcify, norms harden, and workarounds become the norm. This isn't laziness, it's survival, habits that help us cope in complex systems, embedded in each and every one of us.

Over time, teams begin to tune out the signals they've learned to ignore. Small tensions get shrugged off, silent frustrations become routine, and what once felt awkward now passes unnoticed.

These patterns of adaptation can hide deeper dysfunctions, problems so woven into daily life that only an outsider can spot them. When

unmanaged change accumulates, it leads to employee fatigue, confusion, and lower productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Prosci's research confirms that poor alignment of workflows and communication spikes resistance and confusion, making it harder for teams to adapt.<sup>2</sup> Outsiders aren't smarter; they're simply not numb to the noise. They haven't sat through the same exhausting conversations ten times. They don't protect old assumptions.

They just observe and notice:

- The edge in someone's voice on a certain topic.
- Hesitation when a tool is mentioned.
- Questions that never get answered.

Clarity starts with presence, not process.

Observing like an outsider means suspending what you think you know and truly hearing the system. This reveals quiet friction points:

- The friction people laugh off.
- The meeting that always runs late but never gets questioned.
- The workaround that is older than the problem it solves.

These aren't quirks, they're breadcrumbs to misalignment.

No fancy frameworks, just attention, neutrality, and patience.

Clarity begins by witnessing, not fixing.

---

1. Gartner - Change Fatigue & Productivity  
Gartner, Inc. (2020). *Change Fatigue: 5 Principles for Supporting Employees Through Organizational Change*.  
<https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/change-fatigue-5-principles-for-supporting-employees-through-organizational-change>

2. Prosci. (2021).  
*Best Practices in Change Management – 12th Edition*.  
<https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-management-best-practices>



### Three signs your team's cohesion is cracking

- Repetitive complaints that nobody takes seriously.
- Silent tensions that nobody names, with a paralysing effect.
- Invisible workarounds that keep the system limping.

### Try this next:

1. Step back. Adopt a fresh perspective.
2. Ask, "What is this system really telling me?"
3. Listen for what's missing as much as what's said.
4. Observe behaviours, not just words.
5. Map the invisible threads connecting or blocking progress.

### Name what you hear

Say aloud: "This feels off, but no one's talking about it."  
Calling out the quiet friction breaks its power.

### Leadership note:

Leaders must invite fresh perspectives and create space for honest listening. Without this, the same old noise keeps playing on repeat.

---

3. Geertz, C. (1973).  
*The Interpretation of Cultures*.  
Basic Books.

2. Brown, Brené. (2018)  
*Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*.  
Random House.

3. Schein, E. H. (2013).  
*Humble Inquiry*.  
Berrett-Koehler.

## **Rich reading**

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz introduced the idea of “thick description” a way of deeply observing human behaviour in context to uncover the underlying meanings and subtle patterns that shape how people interact. Thick description goes beyond surface observation; it captures the complexity of lived experience, helping us see not just what people do, but why they do it.<sup>1</sup>

Brené Brown’s research on vulnerability and courage highlights that leaders who show authenticity and willingness to be vulnerable foster stronger connections and psychological safety in teams. This openness encourages people to speak honestly, share concerns, and engage deeply, all essential for building clarity.<sup>2</sup>

Edgar Schein’s concept of Humble Inquiry takes this further, arguing that leaders must first ask and listen, without judgment or rushing to solve if they want to uncover the hidden dynamics within teams. By inviting open conversation and showing genuine curiosity, leaders create space for real insights to emerge and for trust to deepen.<sup>3</sup>

Together, these insights teach us that clarity doesn’t come from adding more processes or pushing for greater speed. Instead, it comes from slowing down enough to truly hear what is already there, from noticing the stories, tensions, and questions that usually go unspoken. In this way, clarity is less about doing more, and more about listening deeply, observing patiently, and letting meaning reveal itself.

## 2.1 The Clarity Blueprint: Discovering the hidden truths

*"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." — George Bernard Shaw*

At the heart of The Fieldwork Method is the Clarity Blueprint, a framework designed to reveal hidden misalignment and guide teams to adaptive, lasting clarity. This chapter explores how real misalignment often hides beneath surface issues, and how the Blueprint helps teams find and fix what really matters.

What you see first is not always the essence. Real misalignment often hides in places you least expect. That's why teams can feel stuck even when the surface issues seem clear.

Most teams have a list of pain points: tool fatigue, rework, missed deadlines, etc. But these are symptoms, not causes.

Real misalignment lives beneath the surface. It's a tension people feel but can't name. Research shows emotional and interpersonal strains often appear as duplicated effort, confusion, and lower productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding these hidden tensions requires more than surface fixes. Edwin Friedman, in *A Failure of Nerve*, highlights how leaders must develop emotional maturity to confront difficult realities openly, creating the space where real problems can surface and be addressed.<sup>2</sup>

The Harvard Business Review points to ambiguous decision-making and

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1. Cross, R., Rebele, R., & Grant, A. (2016). *Collaborative Overload*. Harvard Business Review, 94(1), 74-79. <https://hbr.org/2016/01/collaborative-overload>

2. Friedman, E. H. (2007). *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. Church Publishing.

poor communication as common but overlooked sources of frustration.<sup>3</sup>

Richard Hackman's research on teams shows that clear group norms and supportive collaboration conditions predict success more than individual talent.<sup>4</sup>

These findings remind us that surface-level fixes won't suffice. Root problems rarely appear in dashboards or metrics. They hide in quiet tensions, unspoken assumptions, and emotions below the surface. The Clarity Blueprint focuses on uncovering the quiet tensions and unspoken assumptions that most dashboards miss.

We don't start by fixing the loudest complaint. We begin where it quietly hurts, even if no one knows exactly why. That's your system sending a signal: "Something doesn't fit."

That's when we step in. Not with standard advice, but with clear insights based on how your team really works. We find the hidden problems between your processes, tools, and daily habits. Then, together, we design flexible workflows that match how your people actually work.

This builds clarity right into everyday routines. The result: less stress, fewer workarounds, and a team that stays aligned, strong, and ready for change long after we leave.

One agency we worked with believed their main issue was poor client communication. They kept seeing delays, misunderstandings, frustrated clients, and tensions rising inside the team. At first glance, it seemed like

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3. Harvard Business Review (various articles on decision-making and communication)

4. Hackman, J. R. (2002).  
*Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances*.  
Harvard Business Review Press.

3. Lencioni, Patrick. (2002).  
*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*.  
Jossey-Bass.

simple communication failures.

When we looked closer, we saw something else. Team members felt unsafe and were afraid to share bad news or speak up early about issues. Because no one felt comfortable discussing problems openly, misunderstandings kept growing.

By helping the team build trust, openness improved quickly. As trust grew, communication naturally became clearer and easier.

***Misalignment thrives in ambiguity.*** Teams perform better when hidden tensions are *named and addressed*.<sup>1</sup>

That's why **adaptive workflows** are so important. Teams struggle when forced to follow strict rules. The best teams adapt their roles, tools, and processes as new challenges appear. *Adaptive workflows* help teams manage change without breaking apart.

### What are adaptive workflows?

Adaptive workflows are flexible ways of working that evolve with your team's real needs. They adjust to changing situations, involve team input, reduce friction, and support ongoing improvement, helping teams stay aligned and effective as work changes.



## 2.2 Applying the Clarity Blueprint to Scrum Teams

In Scrum teams, these underlying strains often show up as missed sprint goals, unresolved impediments, or reluctance during retrospectives.

While Scrum ceremonies provide structure, the real challenge is uncovering unspoken frustrations: perhaps a team member struggling silently with a tool, or unclear ownership of backlog items.

Applying our method means observing beyond daily stand-ups and sprint planning: understanding how tools like JIRA or Confluence either support or complicate real work, clarifying roles in the context of evolving team dynamics, and fostering an environment where difficult conversations are safe and productive.

This approach helps Scrum teams move from going through the motions to truly collaborating and adapting, boosting velocity and morale over time.

Adaptive workflows keep things clear even when work is complex and help teams stay strong. These workflows are not fixed rules but living systems that are always adjusted through people's insight and teamwork.

*Understanding and designing for adaptive workflows is a cornerstone of the clarity blueprint, turning insight into practical, flexible action that fits this team, in this context, right now.*

By combining deep insight with flexible, human-centred design, the Clarity Blueprint transforms complexity into clarity. It equips teams to evolve workflows that fit their real work, empowering them to thrive amid ongoing change.

Notice:

- The repeated pattern no one questions.
- The feedback loop that never closes.
- The effort that goes unseen.

This is different from the usual quick-fix checks. It is slow, quiet, and gentle. But when you find the main problem, the one people have avoided for months or years, everything falls into place.

### Three signs your team's *cohesion* is cracking

- Everyone knows the quick fixes, but no one talks about them.
- Clear problems are ignored or joked about.
- Employees hear, 'Don't help new hires, they'll figure it out on their own'

### Try this next:

1. **Step in like an outsider.** Start by stepping in fresh and observing without bias. Identify where work slows or stalls and spot hidden blockers and issues that drain energy.
2. **Ask: "If I were new here, would this company's systems, rules, and ways of working make sense?"** Focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities. Make sure everyone knows who owns what and remove confusion around processes and systems.
3. **Spot the unwritten rules. Make the mess visible.** Reveal the hidden, informal rules and show the true state of workflows. This visibility is crucial to measure and review key friction points.
4. **Watch how tasks really move, not the process on paper, but the actual steps and activities people take to get things done.** Observe real work flows to understand how tasks move, then drive alignment by connecting goals, actions, and communication for shared understanding.
5. **Gather what you've seen: hidden blockers, informal workarounds, misalignments, and cultural nuances.** Collect and organise your insights to measure key metrics, track progress, and adjust before small problems grow, sustaining momentum.

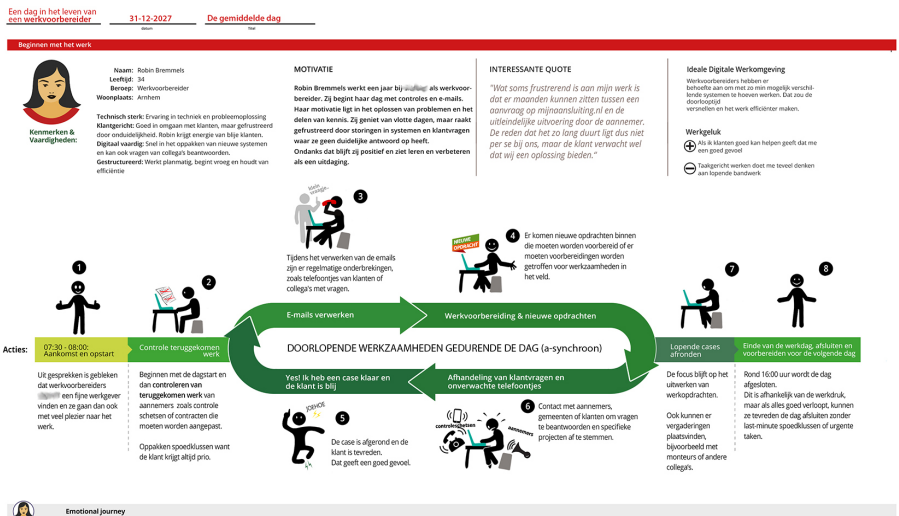
Clarity means showing the things people often miss: hidden problems, unspoken ideas, and quiet tensions. It's about making what is hidden

visible. That begins by noticing what others no longer pay attention to.

## Leadership note:

Leaders need to be open to hearing uncomfortable truths and criticism from employees. Without this, the real problems stay hidden, and clarity can't be reached. *Ask yourself, "What's the tension here that no one dares name?"* Sit with that question. The answer is often the doorway to real change.

## A Clarity Blueprint example



An example of (a part) of the Clarity Blueprint for a B2B organisation in Europe.



## 2.3 The Fieldwork Method®

*Rebuild. Fix what matters, not what's loud*

**Why act now?** Because the old ways of coping (patches, workarounds, and too many new tools) are failing faster than ever. AI won't wait for anyone. Fieldwork Studio's method is made for this urgent time. It is a clear map and practical toolkit for (team)leaders who want to stay ahead, not get left behind.

At the heart of our approach is the C.L.E.A.R. Method, a five-step cycle that guides teams from hidden friction to adaptive clarity:



We don't impose rigid controls or forced role changes. Instead, through careful listening and mapping, we facilitate calm, practical conversations that lead to clearer, shared ownership, without politics or drama.

Our focus is on creating flexible, **adaptive workflows** that evolve with your team and context. Processes adjust themselves through clear

feedback and shared ownership, ensuring clarity lasts well beyond the first fix.

By taking ownership and setting up *feedback loops*, we create habits that promote **adaptive clarity**. This includes regular check-ins, clear system maps, and open communication channels to maintain healthy and responsive workflows.

This integration of insight and practical system design bridges diagnosis with lasting change, helping you thrive amid complexity and rapid digital transformation.

**Adaptive workflows** enable teams to respond to new challenges with agility, avoiding old patterns and chaos.

We transfer ownership, install feedback loops, and exit cleanly, or stay quietly in the background as clarity's safeguard.

The goal is to embed *adaptive clarity habits*: regular check-ins, visible maps, and open communication channels that keep the system healthy and responsive.

This integration shows how adaptive workflows are essential for moving from diagnosis to lasting change, bridging insight with practical system design grounded in real-world complexity.

### **What is system design?**

is the process of deciding how all the different parts of a project, business, or workflow fit together clearly and effectively. It's about looking at the big picture, understanding how people, tasks, tools, and processes interact and then deliberately arranging these components so they work smoothly together.

## 2.4 Why leaders choose Fieldwork Studio

Leading teams today isn't about pushing harder or adding more tools. It's about seeing clearly where the real problems lie and acting with calm purpose. Spotting workarounds and silent rules helps you understand where motivation lags and culture strains; vital insights for the next stages of C.L.E.A.R.

*Fieldwork Studio helps you do exactly that.*

### 1. Clear, Practical Insight

Forget bulky reports or vague advice. You get a focused, calm blueprint showing where friction actually lives, how it affects your team, and what to do next. This clarity lets you cut through the noise and lead with confidence.

### 2. Less Firefighting, More Flow

Hidden blockers and misalignment cause daily chaos. Fieldwork Studio reveals these quietly sapping your team's energy so you can fix them before they explode. The result? Fewer emergencies, less burnout, smoother work.

### 3. Real Impact on Time and Cost

Misalignment drains resources, wasted effort, duplicated work, and staff turnover. Our method identifies these leaks and helps you plug them. Many leaders see measurable savings and faster delivery within months.

### 4. Sustainable Team Cohesion

Clarity is a practice, not a project. Fieldwork Studio embeds habits and feedback loops that keep your team aligned as things change. This ongoing cohesion protects your team from fatigue and helps them adapt to whatever comes next.

### 5. Strengthen Your Leadership

You don't have to be the loudest voice to lead well. With clarity, you create space for honest conversation and informed decisions. Leaders

who bring this calm decisiveness earn trust, inspire ownership, and become the steady anchor teams rely on. become the steady anchor teams rely on.

## 6. Stay Ahead of Change

In a world of constant digital disruption and shifting demands, waiting isn't an option. Fieldwork Studio gives you early warning and clear options so you can act before problems spiral. This foresight is your safeguard against costly surprises.

Put simply: Fieldwork Studio turns complexity into clarity. It frees you from firefighting, equips you to lead with quiet strength, and builds teams that thrive (not just survive) in change.



## 2.4 See what others have normalised

*Dysfunction often resembles routine rather than chaos.*

Teams grow accustomed to workarounds, delays, and confusion, and begin to see them as normal. What once felt awkward slowly turns into “just how we do things.” It’s easier to keep going with familiar routines than to disrupt the system and intervene. This fallback creates predictability, giving a false sense of stability and normality.

The system hasn’t broken. It has adapted.

- A project restarts every quarter, but no one questions the brief.
- A task runs through one person, “because it’s faster”.
- A tool everyone pretends to use, but no one really does.

This isn’t rare. It’s accepted friction.

People settle quickly into these survival patterns. They write silent rules, create invisible roles, and build entire processes around problems that shouldn’t exist.

But this comes at a cost: *clarity gets replaced by coping.*

### Three signs your team has normalised dysfunction

- Everyone knows the workaround, but no one talks about it
- Obvious inefficiencies are laughed off
- New people are told: “Don’t help, they’ll get used to it”

### Try this next

- Step in like an outsider.
- Ask: “If I were new here, does what I’m seeing here make sense?”
- Spot the unwritten rules.

Watch how work actually flows, not the process on paper, but the real path people take to get things done.

## 2.5 From chaos to a clarity map

*You can't fix what you can't see.*

*Listening comes first.*

*Discomfort follows close behind.*

*Then, the quiet uncovering of what's been normalised.*

*And finally, the aha!-moment arrives.*

It's the moment when everything that felt scattered, and conflicting suddenly comes into focus, the clear insight that untangles a complex situation. That's when *the clarity map* appears.

The clarity map exposes the true context of the team; the process and the tangled mess the organisation faces. It highlights friction points, wasted effort, delayed decisions, and tools abandoned in favour of inefficient workarounds.

Studies have consistently shown that visualising workflow clearly, especially dysfunctions and friction points, dramatically improves problem-solving effectiveness within teams, reducing cognitive load and decision fatigue.<sup>1</sup>

This isn't about blame.

It's about visibility.

Research suggests that clearly naming problems and taking team members on board reduces their defensive response, slowly transforming resistance into collaborative engagement.<sup>2</sup>

This is our approach when dealing with resistant teams.

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1. Baumeister, Roy F., and John Tierney. (2011).  
*"Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength."*

2. Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. (2010).  
*Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard.*  
Broadway Books.

Because once the chaos has form, and people feel heard, they stop being defensive.

That's the power of the Clarity Blueprint.

It doesn't promise a perfect plan. It reveals what's real by bringing calm, focus, and completeness. It doesn't dwell on problems but uncovers the deeper patterns behind them. This clarity creates momentum that guides actions for change.

And that changes everything.

When people can clearly see what's been draining them, when they recognise it, name it, and locate it on a map, they stop coping in silence. This is the start of **rebuilding with intention**.

Research on organisational transparency confirms this: clarity about internal challenges increases trust, motivation, and collective commitment to improvement.<sup>1</sup>

When teams accept 'okay' as good enough, the strain begins to settle into the system's very fabric. This tension doesn't explode all at once, it seeps in quietly, cracking the cohesion that holds teams together.

In the following chapter, we dive deeper into where those cracks first appear, and how they silently fracture alignment.

While clarity is achievable, the path isn't always smooth.

Some organisations face deep resistance, fractured teams, and low trust conditions that make progress difficult. Understanding how to work in these challenging environments is critical for lasting change.

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1. Baker, William E., and Michael R. Sinkula. (1999). *"The Synergistic Effect of Market Orientation and Learning Orientation on Organizational Performance."* Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 27(4), 411-427.

## 2.6 When It Feels Too Late: Finding Clarity in Resistant Systems

Sometimes, organisations feel too far gone. Teams are fractured, trust is low, and resistance runs deep. In these moments, clarity feels impossible. People may not cooperate, and the system seems close to hopeless.

Fieldwork Studio understands this reality. We don't promise overnight transformation or easy fixes. Instead, we start small and neutral, listening carefully, observing without judgment, and building trust quietly over time. Even in the most challenging environments, there are usually individuals or pockets open to dialogue. These early allies become the seeds of momentum.

We focus on low-hanging fruit: manageable changes that reduce pain points and show real value quickly. Using clear, non-threatening data about where friction and misalignment lie helps decision-makers see the cost of inaction. We create safe spaces where people can share their concerns without fear, slowly breaking down walls of silence.

Creating clarity in resistant systems is often incremental and requires patience. It demands difficult conversations and hard decisions, but with strategic facilitation and grounded clarity, it's possible to rebuild cohesion, even when hope feels distant.



# Top 5 actionable takeaways

## Part 2: How to achieve clarity

Here are the key actions from this part to help you move from insight to impact.

### › Listen like an outsider

*Suspend assumptions and truly observe how your team works. Step back and watch real behaviours, not just official process. Notice where work slows or people hesitate. Ask: If I were new, would this make sense? This fresh view reveals hidden misalignments.*

### › Pay attention to quiet friction

*Look beyond loud problems. Notice habitual workarounds, meetings that overrun, or when people seem reluctant to speak. These small tensions often signal deeper issues draining energy and clarity.*

### › Start where it hurts

*Don't rush to fix the loudest or easiest issues. Focus on where the team struggles quietly and repeatedly. Sit with discomfort and spot repeated patterns or unspoken frustrations. Naming these out loud can shift energy towards change.*

### › Map invisible connections

*Visualise the flow of work and communication, including informal ways tasks get done. This helps reveal threads that connect or block progress, showing what supports or hinders team goals.*

### › Build adaptive workflows

*Design flexible processes that evolve with your team's changing needs. Avoid rigid rules; create clear feedback loops and shared ownership so workflows adjust as challenges arise. This keeps teams resilient and aligned as work shifts.*

### Try this next:

Pick one recurring friction you've noticed but haven't addressed. Gather examples from your team, map its impact, and invite a few trusted colleagues to brainstorm small adjustments to test together.



*PART 3: The clarity blueprint*

# Stories, structure, and practical intervention

*The Fieldwork method in action*



### 3.0 Applying clarity in practice: The Fieldwork Method®

*Now that you've learned how to spot misalignment and diagnose root causes, Part 3 explores how to rebuild clarity in your team.*

At the core of the Clarity Blueprint are vital actions like energising your team and aligning goals to create shared purpose. But clarity is more than fixing processes, it's about building a culture of ownership, open collaboration, and lasting change.

This is where motivation becomes momentum, and clarity transforms into lasting strength. ***It's time to turn this understanding into action.***

The Fieldwork Method® is our practical guide for moving *from friction to function*, fast, clear, and without fluff. It takes the invisible, tangled chaos you work in every day and turns it into a calm, visible blueprint for change. This isn't just advice or theory. It's a hands-on approach built on-site, in-system, with real people, tools, and workflows.

The method unfolds in five sharp steps:

**1. Clarify roles** → When teams face many new tools, unclear responsibilities quickly cause confusion. Without defined roles, tasks are duplicated or neglected, leading to frustration and inefficiency. In this step, we clarify and communicate who owns what within workflows and tool use. Clear ownership reduces overlap and confusion, helping the team work smoothly despite tool complexity.

**2. Locate friction** → Software overload hides in invisible cracks, duplicated work, inconsistent tool use, and informal workarounds. These hidden frictions slow teams and drain energy but often go unnoticed. We observe workflows impartially to find where tools fail to support real work, and energy leaks. Identifying these blockers helps teams focus on improvements where they matter most.

**3. Energise teams** → Constantly learning new software and switching platforms exhausts teams, draining motivation and focus. This step reduces frustration by simplifying toolsets and workflows. Removing un-

necessary tools and clarifying use restores mental bandwidth. With less overwhelm, teams can focus on core tasks, and collaborate better. This way teams regain momentum for lasting performance.

**4. Align goals** → Fragmented tools and processes scatter attention and cause conflicting priorities. We align software and workflows, involving teams with clear, shared goals. We remove distractions and ensure that tools support team objectives. This focus streamlines communication, and helps the team move forward together.

**5. Review metrics** → Gaining clarity isn't a one-time event. It needs ongoing attention. Therefore, when we use the Fieldwork Method®, we set up feedback loops to track how tool and workflow changes affect productivity, stress, and collaboration. By gathering user data and monitoring key metrics, we regularly review workflows to spot new friction and challenges. This continuous process keeps clarity alive and adapts to the team's evolving needs.

In the chapters ahead, we'll explore the Clarity Blueprint itself, the map you'll use to guide real change. And we'll examine how to make that change stick, so your team doesn't just survive, but thrives.

### 3.1 The ten windows of misalignment

*"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." — Marcel Proust*

Most teams believe they are more or less aligned based on their daily routines, until they gain clarity and see what's really going on. True alignment only emerges when you look beyond the obvious and understand the full picture beneath the surface.

There are many elements that make up the system. Not just the project goals, roadmap, or tools in use; but also:

- How people communicate
- How decisions really get made
- Where things get stuck
- Where things repeat
- Where energy silently leaks out

Research confirms that clarity on these dimensions, especially **roles, decisions, and processes**, significantly boosts team effectiveness and reduces conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The Clarity Blueprint captures these misalignments in a structured way. The image below offers a humorous metaphor that shows how different perspectives and misunderstandings can distort what a project actually looks like in practice.

Each window highlights a friction point we seek to locate and clarify as part of the C.L.E.A.R. process. Understanding these windows feeds directly into *Energising teams* and *Aligning goals*, crucial next steps in the C.L.E.A.R. model (next page)

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1. Mathieu, J. E., Tannenbaum, S. I., Donsbach, J. S., & Alliger, G. M. (2014). *A Review and Integration of Team Composition Models: Moving Toward a Dynamic and Temporal Framework*. *Journal of Management*, 40(1), 130–160.

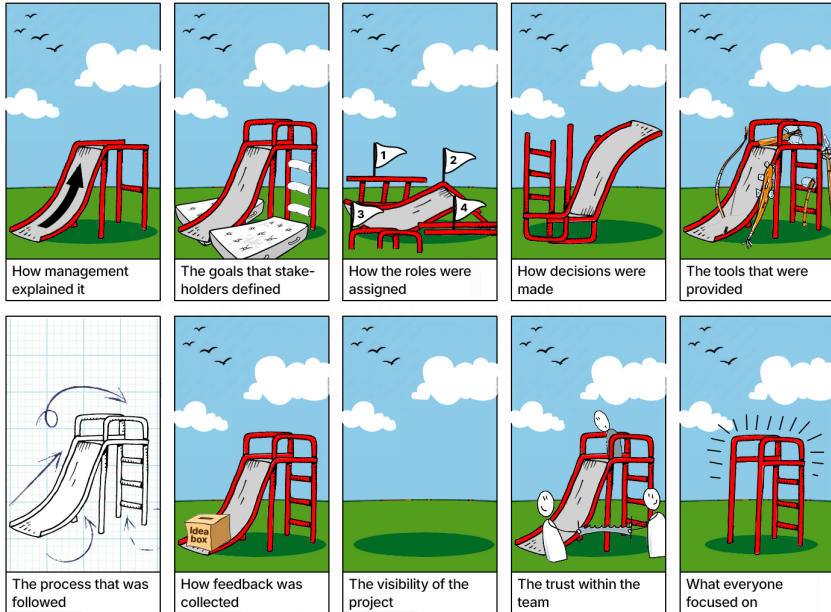


Image inspired by the “Swing” project management metaphor, adapted for Fieldwork Studio.

Most misalignment lives spread across these ten dimensions:

**1. Perspective** → How management explained it

Shows how leadership's vision can differ from frontline reality.

**2. Goals** → Are we clear on why we're doing this?

Highlights the need for a shared purpose that guides the team.

**3. Roles** → Does everyone know who owns what?

Clarifies ownership to prevent confusion and duplicated effort.

**4. Decisions** → Are choices made transparently or by accident?

Exposes unclear decision-making that causes frustration.

**5. Tools** → Are we using tools that help, or tools we resent?

Reveals how mismatched or excessive tools drain energy and create frustration.

**6. Process** → Is there a shape to how we work, or just repetition?

Highlights where workflows lack clarity and become inefficient cycles.

**7. Feedback** → Does input flow both ways, or disappear?

Emphasises the importance of open, two-way communication for continuous improvement.

**8. Visibility** → Can people see progress, or just tasks?

Focuses on transparency to build motivation and trust within teams.

**9. Trust** → Do people feel safe to speak, disagree, or ask for help?

Shows psychological safety as the foundation for effective collaboration.

**10. Focus** → Are we moving together, or just moving?

Addresses alignment of effort to avoid wasted energy and conflicting priorities.

Studies suggest that misalignment in these areas, particularly communication, trust, and visibility, directly contributes to lower productivity, increased stress, and organisational confusion.<sup>1</sup>

Most teams score high on some windows, low on others.

The value isn't in "fixing" every window, but in seeing them all. Because the gaps between these windows are where energy drains. Where alignment quietly collapses and where well-intentioned work pulls in different directions.

Research shows clearly identifying and mapping these areas of organisational friction improves motivation, trust, and engagement by making invisible problems visible and actionable.<sup>1</sup>

Mapping misalignment doesn't shame a team. It frees them.

It shows that what felt personal was often structural. That what looked like resistance was actually confusion. Real, practical clarity isn't about control.

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1. Pentland, A. (2012). *The New Science of Building Great Teams*. Harvard Business Review, 90(4), 60–69.



### 3.3 What we leave behind

Not everything needs to be fixed. Some things need to be released. Not every problem requires immediate intervention. Sometimes, allowing certain tensions, habits, or rigidities to loosen naturally is part of restoring balance and clarity.

Once the system is mapped and the dimension of misalignment is clear, something surprising happens: teams exhale. Someone quietly says, "I told you so," a moment of relief breaking through the tension. Because for the first time, since a long time, the team realises it's a system failure, not a personal failure. Not "you dropped the ball", but "we've been playing with different rules." Not "they're unmotivated", but "the structure makes this harder than it should be." And that makes all the difference.

It aligns with findings that organisational issues are often incorrectly attributed to individual motivation rather than structural misalignment, leading to misguided efforts at resolution.<sup>1</sup>

And in that moment of shared seeing, the rebuild begins.  
Not from scratch, but from clarity.

*Research supports the idea that successful organisational change frequently depends less on adding complexity and more on deliberately reducing unnecessary elements.<sup>2</sup>*

It's often simply better to leave things behind.

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1. Edmondson, A. C. (2012).  
*Teamwork on the fly*.  
Harvard Business Review, 90(4), 72–80.

2. Keller, S., & Price, C. (2011).  
*Beyond Performance: How Great Organizations Build Ultimate Competitive Advantage*.  
John Wiley & Sons.

It's about letting go:

- Of duplicated tools
- Of meetings that create more confusion than progress
- Of polite habits that avoid hard questions
- Of metrics that look good but mean nothing
- Of the idea that more detail equals more control

Studies show that cutting out extra processes, meetings, and metrics lowers mental strain and helps teams work better.<sup>1</sup>

This is the point where you'll see a **reset of the culture**.  
Not through slogans, but through action.

Through small, confident edits that say:

- "We don't need this anymore."
- "Let's stop pretending this works."
- "We can make this easier."

Working better through clarity isn't magic. You don't need to reinvent everything. It's about giving yourself permission to work differently. Dropping what doesn't help and putting more focus on what does.

What you leave behind isn't lost.

Think of it like compost; it helps new ideas grow. It got you to this point.

Now, it's time to move forward with more clarity.

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1. Perlow, L. A., Hadley, C. N., & Eun, E. (2017).  
*Stop the Meeting Madness*.  
Harvard Business Review, 95(4), 62-69.

We have to untangle every single knot!



Maybe not every knot needs untangling...



Not everything needs to be fixed.

Let's carry forward only what matters.



Sometimes, letting go restores clarity.

### 3.4 Three ways forward

While the Clarity Blueprint helps us diagnose where misalignment lives, and the CLEAR Method guides practical steps to address friction and rebuild clarity, the “Three Ways Forward” model tells us how deeply we should we intervene.

Not every team needs a full overhaul. Some can thrive with small adjustments, while others require a fundamental rebuild. The “Three Ways Forward” model bridges this gap by offering a tailored approach to change. It helps leaders and practitioners choose the right scale of intervention; whether to refine, reshape, or rebuild based on the team’s unique context and readiness.

By recognising that organisational change is not one-size-fits-all, this model encourages strategic thinking and avoids unnecessary disruption. It ensures that clarity-building efforts are aligned not only with what’s broken but also with what the team can realistically sustain.

Together, these three models: Blueprint, CLEAR, and Three Ways Forward, form a cohesive toolkit for diagnosing, acting, and adapting with intention and insight..

Research shows that effective organisational interventions rarely succeed as one-size-fits-all solutions; instead, successful teams benefit most from tailored, context-specific adjustments.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Katzenbach, J. R., & Smith, D. K. (1993). *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*. Harvard Business Review Press.

That's why we don't offer a single "solution." We offer *three* ways forward:

### 1. Refine

- › The core is solid, but a few parts need realignment.
- › This is where a team fine-tunes roles, reclaims lost visibility, or clears up one or two points of confusion that ripple out.
- › Think of it as a clarity tune-up.

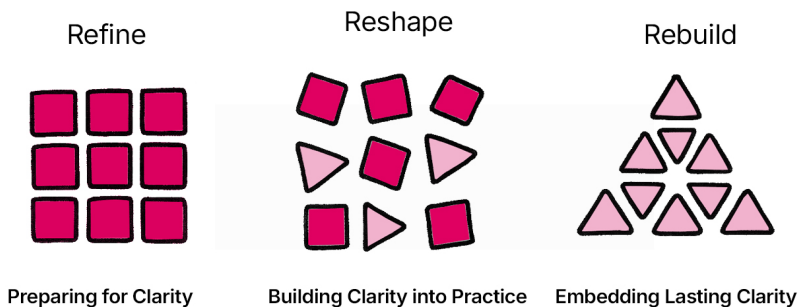
### 2. Reshape

- › Here, the team is working, but not well.
- › There's cohesion, but it's brittle. Processes don't fit anymore. The tools don't support the way people actually work.
- › This path involves reworking some foundations, without burning anything down.

### 3. Rebuild

- › Sometimes, the system is so messy that small changes aren't enough.
- › The team has changed, the goals have shifted, and the clarity map reveals deeper contradictions.
- › This is a clean-slate approach, still grounded in the blueprint, but bold in scope.

## Three Ways Forward-model



Evidence from organisational psychology confirms that enabling teams to consciously choose their change trajectory significantly increases commitment and sustained success.<sup>1</sup>

What matters is that teams choose, together.

Clarity isn't about control. It's about agency, teams choosing their own path intentionally, as one.

A large international insurance company wanted to unify its consumer and professional website sections under one design. This was not easy. Different departments did not work well together. They often competed, and only a few people worked well as a team. Collaboration was hard, and progress stopped.

We were asked to find hidden problems and map how work really happened, not just how it was supposed to. We found unclear roles, conflicting priorities, and poor communication. Even though efforts were made to open conversations and build agreement, deep divisions and politics made change very hard.

This experience highlighted a vital truth: *without foundational cohesion and trust, even the clearest methods can struggle to make a difference.* Clarity and alignment aren't one-time goals; they must be nurtured continuously.

When people understand their options, they stop bracing for noise and start moving with purpose. Often, the most powerful step is the simplest: "We see the mess. We trust ourselves to clean it up."

Research consistently shows that teams empowered to make decisions

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1. Burnes, B. (2004).

*Emergent Change and Planned Change – Competitors or Allies?*

International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 24(9), 886–902.

report higher engagement, resilience, and better alignment with organisational goals.<sup>1</sup>

But as cohesion weakens and cracks spread, the system's ability to absorb change shrinks. What should be growth turns into exhaustion and resistance.

Next, we'll look at how **not** building habits creates noise that confuses teams and slowly breaks down clarity and trust.

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1. Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. (2011). *"Antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations: A meta-analytic review."* Journal of Applied Psychology, 96(5), 981–1003.

# Top 5 actionable takeaways

## Part 3: The clarity blueprint

Here are the key actions from this part to help you move from insight to impact.

### › Use the ten windows of misalignment

*Check all ten dimensions (goals, roles, decisions, trust, and more) to spot gaps. Misalignment often hides where you least expect it, so seeing the full picture matters more than fixing isolated issues.*

### › Focus on seeing, not fixing every window

*Your goal is clear awareness, not immediate perfection. Mapping misalignment helps spot where energy drains and where alignment quietly breaks down.*

### › Map your system honestly

*Include friction points, delays, feedback loops, and informal work-arounds. Don't hide or sugarcoat issues, visibility is the first step to change.*

### › Release what no longer serves

*Let go of duplicated tools, pointless meetings, and metrics that don't help. Simplifying creates space for clarity and energy to return.*

### › Choose your path intentionally

*Decide whether to refine, reshape, or rebuild based on your map. Involve your team in this decision to build ownership and commitment that sustains change.*

### Try this next:

Pick one misalignment window to explore deeper. Gather evidence, map its impact, and discuss with your team how small changes could improve that area.





*PART 4: Making it stick*

# Sustainability over reinvention

*Building habits for lasting clarity*



## 4.0 Clarity needs a habit

*Fixing misalignment and rebuilding clarity marks only the beginning. Part 4 focuses on how to embed clarity deeply enough that it endures.*

Clarity is not a one-off fix or project to check off. It's a cultivated habit, a steady rhythm of energising your team and aligning goals that keeps motivation strong and culture resilient. The most effective leaders nurture this quietly, through small, consistent actions that weave clarity into daily work life.

By fostering this ongoing practice, you protect your team's energy, stave off burnout, and nurture a culture of cohesion that fosters clarity.

Research consistently finds that teams who regularly revisit and renew their shared understanding perform better, experience less fatigue, and sustain momentum far longer than those who treat clarity as a one-time event.<sup>1</sup>

Alignment isn't maintained by grand gestures or lengthy meetings. It's preserved in the subtle, deliberate pauses and check-ins embedded in everyday routines:

- A quick glance at the clarity blueprint before starting a sprint.
- A reflective pause after a launch to ask, "What slipped away?"
- A brief team huddle to confirm, "Are we still fixing the right problem?"

These small rituals build a powerful habit, one that, like any disciplined practice, strengthens over time.

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1. Seibert, S. E., Wang, G., & Courtright, S. H. (2011). *Antecedents and consequences of psychological and team empowerment in organizations: A meta-analytic review*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(5), 981–1003.

Systems inevitably degrade. New tools arrive, priorities shift, people move on. Without intentional care, clarity slips away and the familiar fog returns.<sup>1</sup>

But with a simple, regular regimen of reflection and adjustment, clarity becomes a shared muscle, flexed naturally and effortlessly. It becomes part of your team's collective instinct.

Teams that maintain this ongoing commitment spend far less time managing friction and far more time doing meaningful work.<sup>2</sup>

Because clarity is alive; it breathes, shifts, and grows with your team.

And those who make space for it regularly are the ones who keep their energy for what truly matters.

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1. Liu, C., Wang, Y., & Rauch, A. (2020).

*Team reflexivity and team performance: A meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(8), 881–896.

2. Rico, R., Gibson, C. B., Sánchez-Manzanares, M., & Clark, M. A. (2020).

*Building team effectiveness through adaptation: Team knowledge and implicit and explicit coordination.*

*Organisational Psychology Review*, 10(2), 71–98.

## 4.1 Team fitness without burnout

*Being fit for work doesn't mean doing more. It means knowing what **not** to do.*

In the rush to keep pace, many teams mistake busyness for productivity. They push harder, add more meetings, and chase output, believing speed equals success.

**But research shows the opposite.** Increasing pace without focus leads to burnout, mistakes, and dwindling innovation.<sup>1</sup>

True fitness means knowing when to pause, and what to prioritise.

The most resilient teams don't just move fast, they move smart. They question unnecessary meetings, and resist tool overload, so they have more time for satisfying deep work.

By choosing alignment over activity, they protect their energy and maintain sustainable progress.

Studies confirm that teams who focus on intentional work, rather than constant availability, not only get more done but feel more fulfilled at work.<sup>2</sup>

This cohesion acts like a shield, protecting them from wasting time on misunderstandings and distractions. So, clear communication and shared understanding help teams stay focused and efficient.

This creates space for thoughtful decisions, healthier rhythms, and the permission to rest without guilt.

Not sprinting endlessly, but moving with purpose and balance.

This is the kind of fitness that endures.

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1. Perlow, L. A., & Kelly, E. L. (2014). *Toward a Model of Work Redesign for Better Work and Better Life*. *Work and Occupations*, 41(1), 111–134.

2. Newport, C. (2016). *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. Grand Central Publishing.

## 4.2 Working quietly, leading clearly

*Leadership isn't about being the loudest voice in the room. It's about creating space. Space for clarity, honesty, and focus.*

Many believe leadership means having all the answers, being decisive, and always in control. But the most effective leaders often work quietly. They listen deeply, seek to understand before acting, and lead with calm intention rather than force.

These leaders don't rush to fix problems or dominate conversations. Instead, they create an environment where people feel safe to speak up, share concerns, and contribute openly, even when things are uncertain or uncomfortable.



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1. Schein, E. H. (2013). *Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

2 Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2017). *Psychological safety: A meta-analytic review and extension*. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113–165.

This kind of psychological safety, where honesty is welcomed and vulnerability is met with trust, is linked to stronger team performance and more innovation.<sup>1</sup>

Quiet leaders lower tension and restore energy. Their presence allows the team to breathe again, fostering a culture where clarity spreads naturally, conversations are straightforward, and focus sharpens. Over time, this creates a resilient environment where people collaborate openly and move forward together, adapting smoothly to the cultivation of clarity.

Research shows transparent communication and inclusive leadership directly improve engagement and collaboration, especially in hybrid or fast-moving teams.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Power of Clarity and Momentum**

I know how it feels to be stuck. Watching things slow down, feeling the weight of confusion and misalignment around you. It's frustrating and exhausting. But I've also seen how just a little clarity can shift everything.

When you start to see clearly, when roles, goals, and processes 'click', momentum takes hold. It's like pushing a heavy object that finally starts to move. And once it's moving, it keeps going.

If you're reading this, it means you already sense that 'click', like the sense you get when you attach one Lego cube firmly to another. You just feel how to make things better, to bring your team together, and to create something that lasts. Don't wait for perfect conditions or a big push from outside. Momentum is fragile and precious, once it's there it's yours to catch and build.

The hardest step is the first one. Take it with courage. You already have

the insight, and now you have the tools too. Lead your team from noise to clarity, from friction to flow.

You don't have to shout to make a difference. You just have to start.

The future isn't waiting. Neither should you.

## **Conclusion: Beyond Clarity**

Clarity isn't an endpoint, it's the beginning.

In a world reshaped by rapid AI-driven disruption, clarity can no longer be seen merely as a desirable trait or a productivity hack. It's a foundational survival skill. The core promise of clarity isn't just fewer mistakes, reduced friction, or streamlined workflows—though it delivers these as well. The deeper promise of clarity is resilience: the capacity to remain stable, decisive, and human amid accelerating complexity and constant change.

Teams that survive (and thrive) in this new environment won't be those who merely automate or adopt the latest tools. They'll be those who understand that beneath every workflow, every tool, and every digital transformation lies a fundamentally human problem: maintaining clarity when everything around us shifts.

AI is reshaping identities, roles, and hierarchies at a speed we've never experienced. It's dismantling traditional structures and rewriting the rules of meaningful work. But rather than fearing this shift, we must engage it intentionally, using clarity as our anchor and guide.

The Fieldwork Method equips you not only to diagnose complexity but to design clarity into your systems from the start. It invites leaders, operators, and builders to continuously question, realign, and renew their structures and workflows, grounding every decision in deep, human-centred understanding.

But clarity doesn't stop with better decisions or smoother processes. It extends into the very fabric of organisational culture, reshaping how



we see ourselves, our colleagues, and our work itself. It reminds us that no matter how sophisticated our tools become, our greatest strengths remain distinctly human: insight, creativity, empathy, and adaptability.

As you move forward, let clarity become more than a temporary relief. Let it become your default state, a habitual, strategic practice embedded deeply into your organisation's DNA. Because in the uncertain terrain ahead, clarity won't just be advantageous; it will be indispensable.

This is your opportunity: to rebuild intentionally, design thoughtfully, and navigate confidently, even as the landscape shifts beneath your feet.

Welcome to your next chapter.

# Top 5 actionable takeaways

## Part 4: Making it stick

Think of the C.L.E.A.R. method as your steady compass: **Clarify roles, Locate friction, Energise your team, Align goals, and Review progress.** These steps work together to build a motivated, clear, and resilient culture. Keep in mind, sustained change is not a single event but an ongoing cycle of energising people and aligning efforts. This is the daily practice that keeps clarity alive and teams thriving.

Key actions from this part to help you move from insight to impact:

› **Treat clarity as a habit, not a one-off**

*Build simple, regular rituals like brief check-ins and shared reflections to keep alignment alive. Clarity needs ongoing attention to stay strong.*

› **Prioritise focused, intentional work over busyness**

*Help your team say no to unnecessary meetings, tools, and tasks. Clear priorities protect energy and boost productivity.*

› **Lead quietly by creating space**

*Listen deeply, foster psychological safety, and encourage honest communication. Strong leadership is about making it safe to speak up.*

› **Foster a culture where clarity spreads**

*Encourage open, plain communication and shared understanding. When clarity is contagious, teams focus better and move forward together.*

› **Regularly review and adjust**

*Use quick metrics and feedback loops to catch drift early. Small course corrections keep your team aligned and prevent burnout.*

**Try this next:**

Start a five-minute check-in before your next team meeting.

Ask: "Are we still solving the right problem?" and "What's losing focus?"

Use these answers to guide your next steps.

# EVERY TEAM HITS A WALL AT SOME POINT

THE TOOLS KEEP MULTIPLYING. DECISIONS  
GET HEAVIER. AND WHAT ONCE WORKED  
SMOOTHLY... NO LONGER DOES

It's not you. It's how things are set up.

**This book is your way out.**

The Clarity Blueprint is a field guide for leaders, operators, and builders who feel the friction but can't name where it's coming from. It guides you through spotting hidden misalignments, mapping the mess beneath the surface, and rebuilding your team's system from the inside out.

You'll discover:

- Why clarity breaks first and often without warning
- How to uncover the silent workarounds and unspoken tensions draining your team
- Practical steps to clarify roles, locate friction, energise your people, align goals, and sustain progress
- Why AI tools amplify dysfunction, and how to use them without adding noise
- How to rebuild alignment quickly, calmly, and with minimal drama

If you follow what this book teaches, you won't just fix how your team works, you'll become the clarity catalyst your people didn't know they needed.

Because in a world drowning in tools and noise,  
clarity isn't a nice-to-have. It's how you survive.