

Process Mapping Framework

How to turn messy workflows into structured maps.

What This Framework Is

Most workflows exist informally in people's heads rather than on paper, which is exactly where the failure points hide. This framework captures every actual step, including the ones nobody officially documented, and lays them out so handoffs and ownership gaps become visible instead of discovered the hard way.

The Core Mechanism

- 1. Full step capture.** List every step the work actually goes through, including informal workarounds, not just the official version of the process.
- 2. Mark the handoffs.** Every point where work changes hands gets flagged, since handoffs are where most process failures actually originate.
- 3. Flag the gaps.** Any step with no clear owner, or no clear next step defined, gets marked explicitly rather than assumed to be fine.

How to Apply This Week

1. Pick one recurring process and write down every real step, including workarounds.
2. Mark each handoff point between people or teams.
3. Flag any step with an unclear owner or unclear next action.

Where This Breaks Down

Mapping usually breaks down when only the official version of the process gets captured (the version in the training doc) while the informal workarounds everyone actually uses stay invisible. Those workarounds are often there because the official step doesn't work under real conditions, which makes them the most valuable thing to capture, not the least. A map that only reflects how the process is supposed to work won't surface the gaps that are actually causing problems.

Simple Tracker

Step	Owner	Handoff To	Gap Identified?