

The Pattern Trace

A framework for working backwards from visible results to root cause.

Most leaders stare at the result and try to manage it. The Pattern Trace teaches you to work backwards from what is visible to where the problem actually began. Words tell you what someone wants you to believe. Evidence tells you what is actually true.

STEP 1

Name the Result

What is visible and measurable right now?

Do not explain it yet. Just name it clearly. Turnover. Revenue decline. Stagnant growth. Cultural erosion. Name the result and nothing else.

What result are you starting with?

STEP 2

Trace the Timeline

When did the first signal appear? Not when it became a crisis in the numbers or on the dashboards.

When did someone first notice something was off, and what happened to that information?

When was the first signal and what happened when it was raised?

STEP 3

Follow the Evidence, Not the Words

Seasoned leaders know the language. They have been in leadership long enough to speak the language of results. They know what to say to make things look right or appear completely credible. But when the evidence tells a different story, the words stop mattering.

What does the evidence show? What do the numbers, behavior, and outcomes actually tell you?

STEP 4

Find Who Owns It

Not who is listed as responsible on paper. Who is actually accountable for this outcome and what does that accountability look like in practice? If you cannot answer that clearly, you have found the next layer of the problem.

Who owns this result and what does their accountability look like in practice?

STEP 5

Name the Pattern

The root cause that has been there the whole time. Not the symptom. The source. What is the underlying pattern driving this result? Has anyone already identified it and been ignored? This is where the real work begins.

What is the pattern underneath this result? What is the source, not the symptom?

**THIS WEEK'S
ACTION PLAN**

Pick one visible problem in your organization right now and start at Step 1. Name the result. Just that. One result, clearly stated. The rest follows.