



FOR DELIVERY & ENGINEERING MANAGERS

# Why change initiatives stall

7 hidden reasons your improvements don't stick, and the early-warning signs you can spot before they do.

---



# You've seen this movie **before**.

A new way of working launches with real energy. Three months later it's quietly back to how things always were. The board's abandoned, the rituals are skipped, and nobody quite admits it stalled. **It's rarely the method that failed.** Improvement efforts stall for a small set of recognisable reasons, and each one shows a warning sign weeks before the collapse. Here are the seven, and what to watch for.

1

## No sponsor with skin in the game

Lasting change needs a leader who owns the outcome, not just one who applauds the kickoff. Without real backing, the first hard trade-off kills it.

### EARLY WARNING

Leadership is loud at the launch, then goes silent. No one above you asks about it again.

### THE FIX

Name one sponsor who reviews the outcome on a set cadence, monthly at minimum.

2

## Rushing it: changing everything at once

Big-bang reorganisations overwhelm people faster than they can absorb. Without an incremental roadmap, the new normal never gets a chance to stabilise.

### EARLY WARNING

You rolled out new roles, tools and rituals in the same fortnight, and no one can describe how work flows now.

### THE FIX

Change one thing, let it settle, then take the next step.

3

## Nobody models the new way

Culture changes when leaders demonstrate the behaviour (by example and inspiration), not when it's mandated in a wiki page. People copy what managers do, not what they post.

### EARLY WARNING

The new process is documented, but under pressure everyone still escalates and decides the old way.

### THE FIX

Have leaders visibly work the new way first, especially when it's inconvenient.

# The four that **quietly** do the most damage.

4

## Change for its own sake, with no purpose

Doing a method “because we should” never holds. A change has to be a means to a named end, with a way to measure progress toward it.

### EARLY WARNING

Asked “what number should this move?”, the room goes quiet, or everyone names a different one.

### THE FIX

Pick the one outcome that matters and the single metric that proves it.

5

## Treated as a side project

New ways of working require changes to core management processes, not spare-time effort. If it isn't a strategic priority, it's abandoned the moment a deadline looms.

### EARLY WARNING

Improvement work is the first thing dropped when the quarter gets tight.

### THE FIX

Protect capacity for the change like any other committed delivery.

6

## Too much stress, too little collaboration

Change should be made *with* the people doing the work, step by step, with just enough pressure to move and never enough to overwhelm. Overstress the system and it snaps back.

### EARLY WARNING

The team is visibly tired and has quietly started reverting to the old habits.

### THE FIX

Evolve in small, agreed increments and let the team set the pace.

7

## Fighting the culture instead of working with it

You can't bolt new practices onto a culture that rewards the opposite. When incentives pull one way and the process another, the culture wins every time.

### EARLY WARNING

Practices get adopted on paper and abandoned in the hallway, because what's rewarded never changed.

### THE FIX

Change what you recognise and reward, not just the workflow on the wall.



# One root cause **under all seven.**

Look closely and the same fault line runs through every reason: change was imposed as a big, disruptive **event** (a reorg, a new framework, a “transformation”) instead of **evolved** from where the work actually is today. Big events trigger resistance, overwhelm, and snap-back. Evolution doesn’t.

## THE SHIFT THAT MAKES CHANGE STICK

### Start with what you do now. Improve by evolution, not revolution.

Make the work **visible**, agree sensible limits so the system stops drowning, and improve in small steps the team can actually absorb. No reorg. No big bang. You keep your roles and titles. You change how work **flows**. That’s the core of **flow management**, and it’s why it survives where transformations stall.

## GO ONE STEP FURTHER

### Flow Management for Managers

The certified course *Introduction to the Kanban Method*

A self-paced course for delivery and engineering managers who want improvements that hold, built on the method behind some of the best-known turnarounds in our field. Includes the full video course, the certification exam, and a digital copy of the book.

[Tell me more →](#)

Launch price **€49** · ~~normally €350~~