



Why Normal Work Doesn't Go To Plan

Understanding How Real Work Happens



**EVENT
LEARNING**

A U S T R A L I A

Ever followed a procedure perfectly & still had things go wrong?

The problem isn't that people don't follow the plan – it's that the plan doesn't reflect reality.





Work as Intended

- Procedures
- Policies
- Risk Assessments



Work as Intended

- Real-time decisions
- Trade-offs
- Adjustments



Why the Gap exists?

- Changing conditions
- Time Pressures
- Missing or imperfect information
- Resource constraints
- Conflicting goals



People are not the problem - they are the solution.



Adaptations not Violations

= How work gets done.

Local Rationality

- Taking a shortcut to meet time pressure
- Using experience over procedure
- Working around a broken system

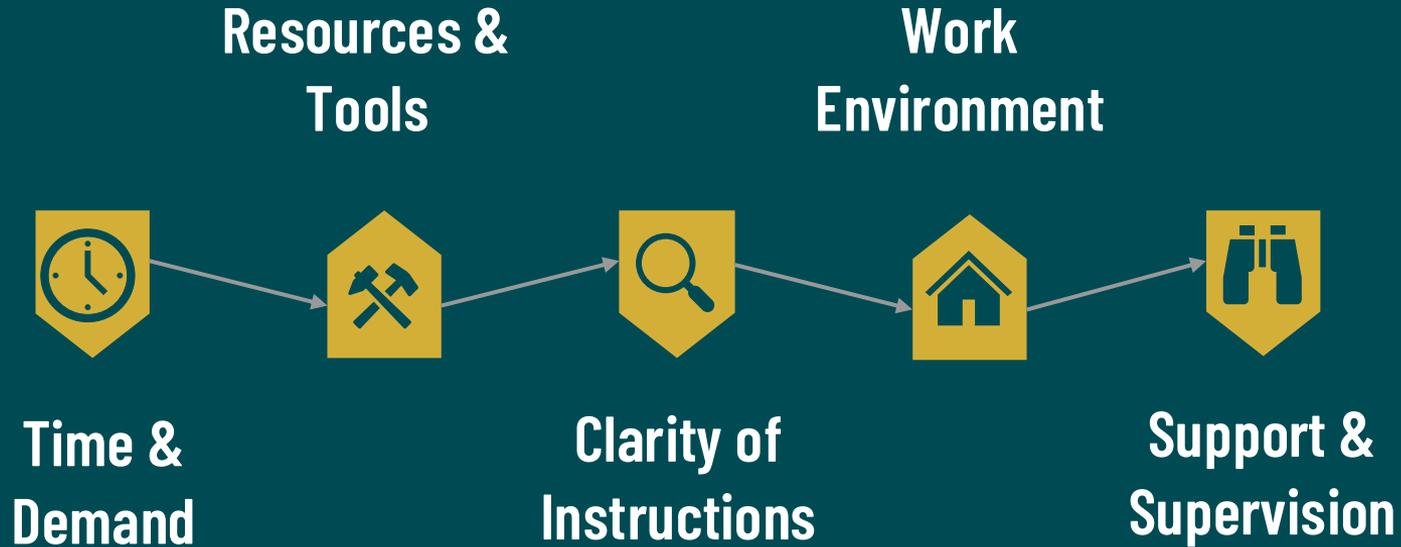




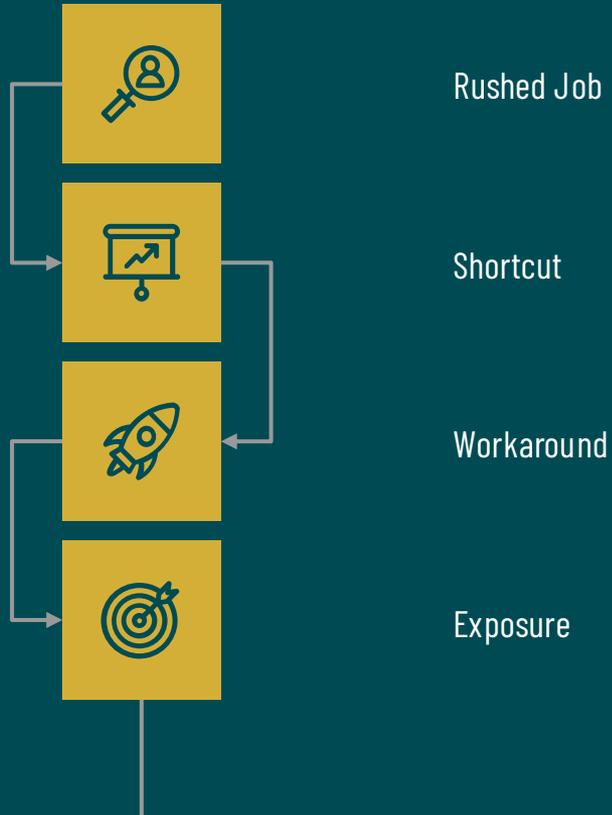
The Trap of Hindsight

- Easy to judge after the fact
- Hard to see context at the time

What Actually Influences Work?



Small Pressures -> Big Outcomes



System vs Individual



Focus on Person

"Why did they do that?"



Focus on System

"What made that make sense?"

What high performing organisations do differently?



Stay close to the work

- Leaders understand real work.
- Not just reports.



Pay attention to small problems

Minor issues = early warnings.



Expect the unexpected.

Systems are dynamic.



Learn Constantly

From everyday work not just incidents.



Listen to the people doing the work.

Expertise sits at the frontline.

What should you do differently?

Checking -> Understanding

Blame -> Curiosity

Paper -> Practice



- Instead of: "Did you follow the process?"
- Ask: "What made this task hard?"

- Replace judgement with interest.
- Look for context.

- Go where the work is.
- Talk to people.
- Learn how work actually happens.

3 Questions to Use Immediately



What makes this job difficult?



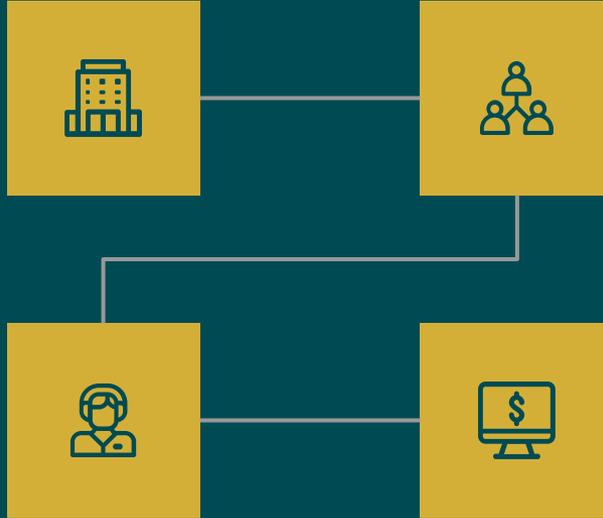
What do you have to work around?



What could go wrong on a bad day?

Key Takeaways

Work doesn't go to plan - and that's normal.



The Gap between plan and reality is where insight lives.

People adapt to make work succeed.

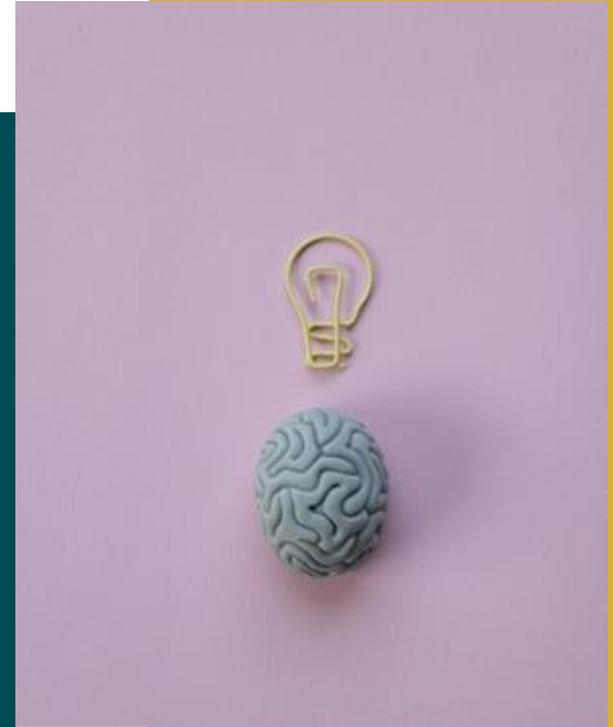
Systems shape outcomes.



“If you want to improve safety, don’t start with what went wrong- start with how work really happens.”

– Georgina Poole

**What will you
look at
differently
tomorrow?**





Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

georginapoole@eventlearning.com.au

+61 488 807 233

www.eventlearning.com.au

