

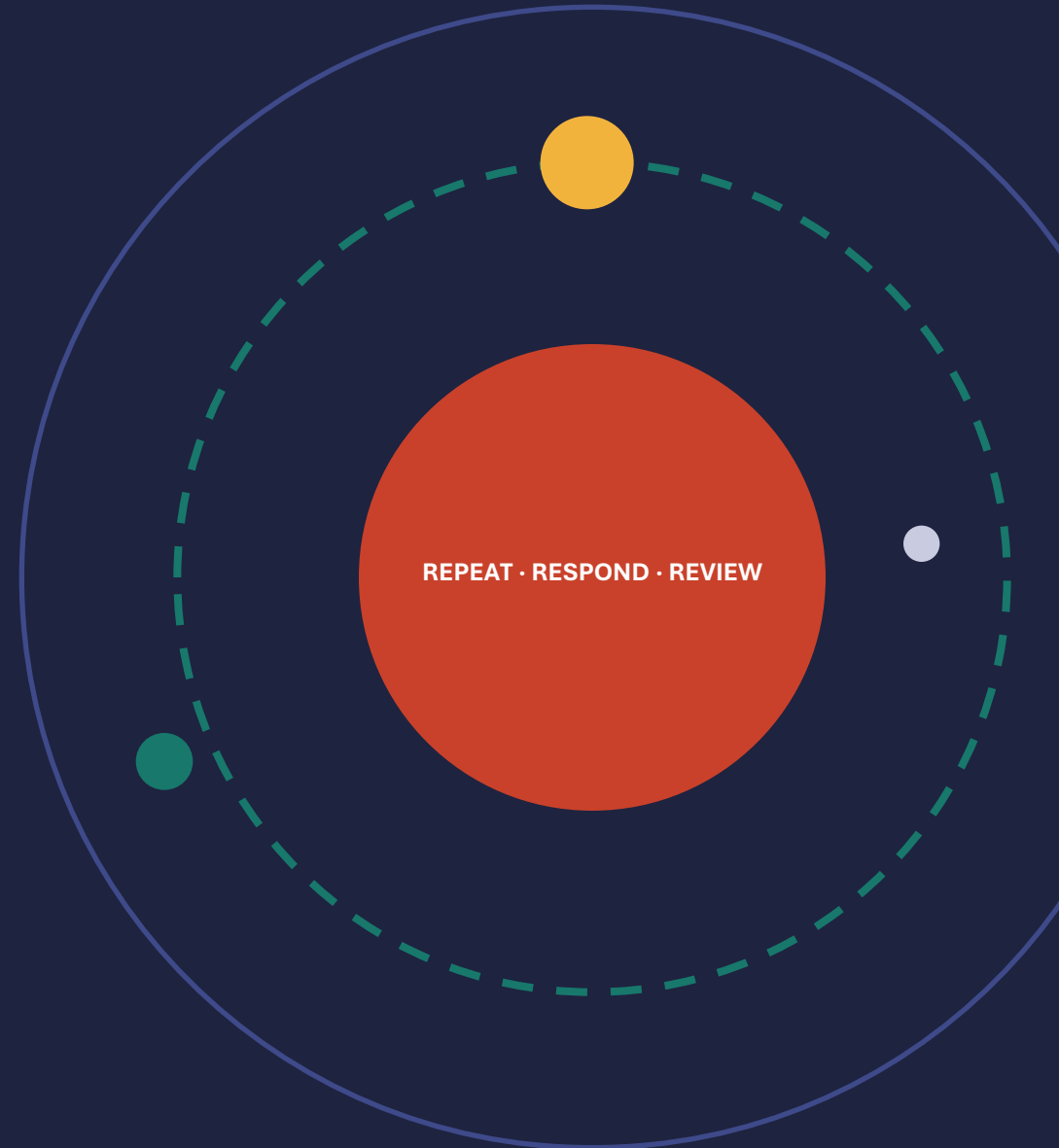
RITUALS OF WORK PLAYBOOK

Operationalising rituals using the Būdaya Framework

A practical playbook for changing everyday behaviour at work and in organisations

A field guide for leaders and teams
Developed by **Roshan Thiran**

ritualsofwork.com
budaya.app



Būdaya

PREFACE



Why we are giving this playbook away

Leaderonomics and its culture partner Büdaya are sharing their full culture IP, free, so any leader or team can start the work. This is part of the restorative mission of Leaderonomics and Büdaya in helping transform, heal and fix communities and organisations.

OUR MISSION

Leaderonomics exists to help individuals and organisations transform. Culture decides whether that change lasts: a toxic culture undoes the best strategy, training and talent.

Büdaya built these tools to grow the culture of every Leaderonomics venture. **We are giving all of it away** so the same work can happen in yours.

Who it is for

Leaders, HR partners and culture champions in companies, NGOs, schools and public bodies.

How to use it

Start with one live problem, one ritual and one willing team. The next page maps the route.

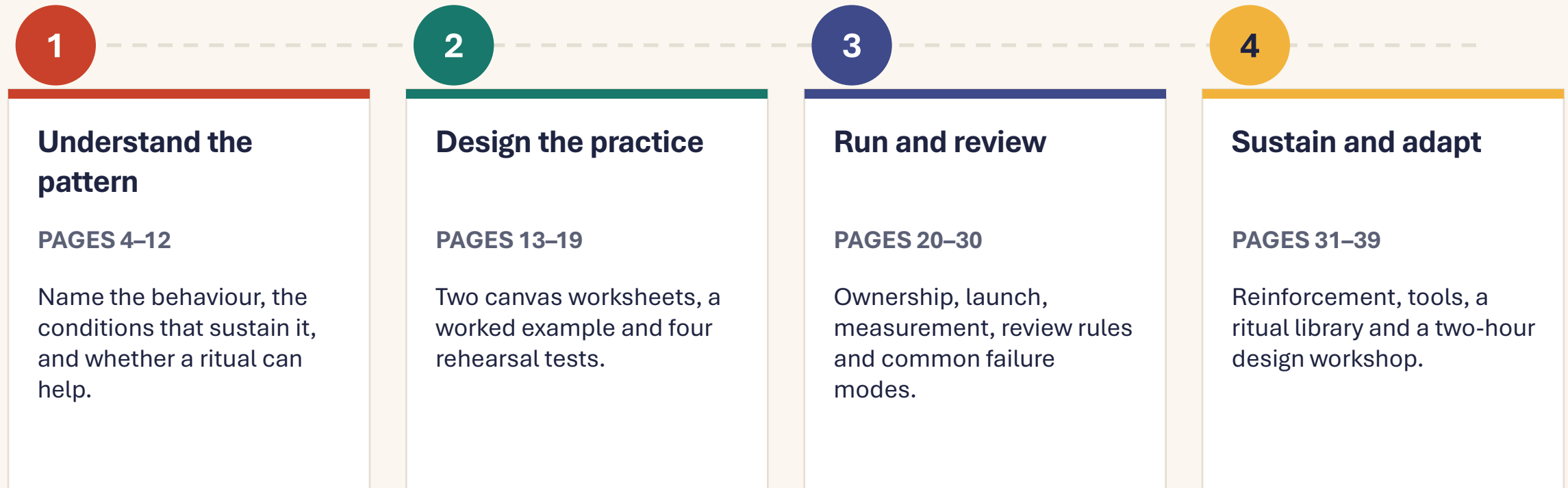
Make it your own

Adapt every tool to your context, and credit Büdaya and Roshan Thiran when you share it.

Need support? Write to budaya@leaderonomics.com for guidance and partnership on your own culture work.

One team. One behaviour. One pilot.

For team leaders, HR partners and culture champions. Start with a live problem your team can influence, not a culture-wide ambition. **Work through the four parts in order.** They group the six-stage cycle on page 8. Fill in the worksheets as you go and treat your first ritual as a pilot to test and adjust.

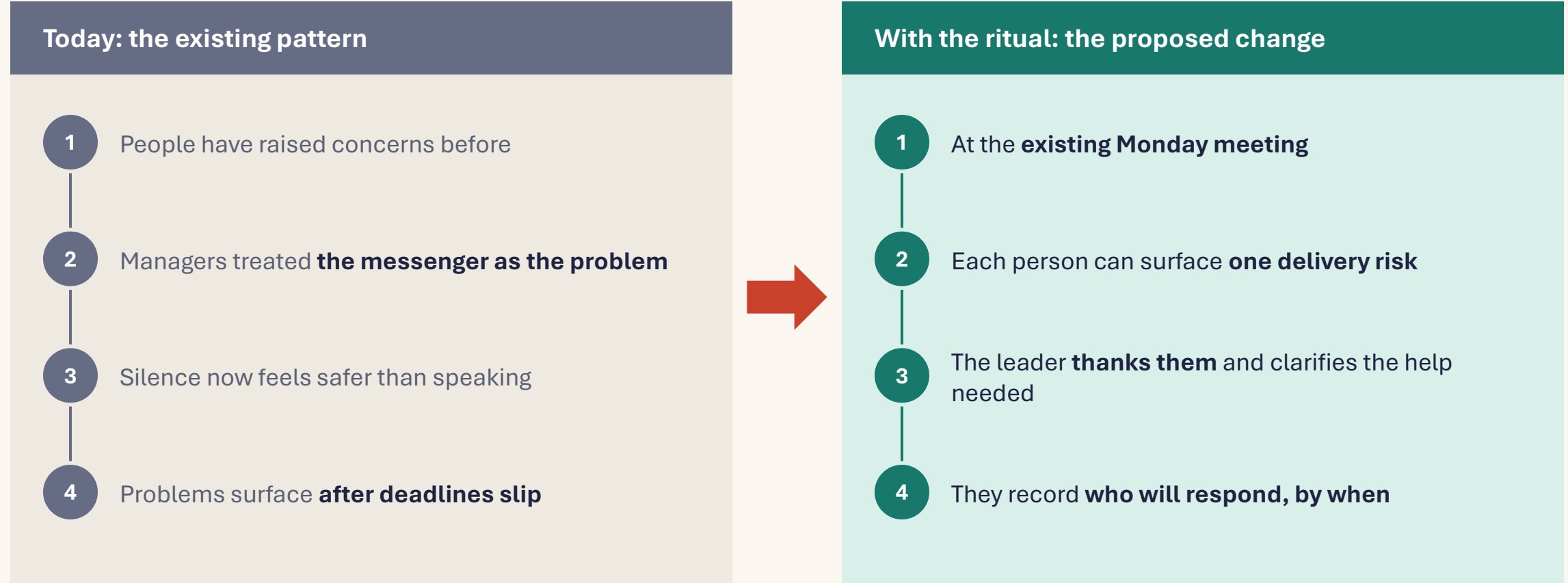


Start small: one willing team and one ritual. Expand only when the evidence justifies it.

THE PROBLEM IN PRACTICE

What happens after someone speaks decides whether they speak again

Illustrative scenario: a delivery team that hears about problems only after deadlines slip.

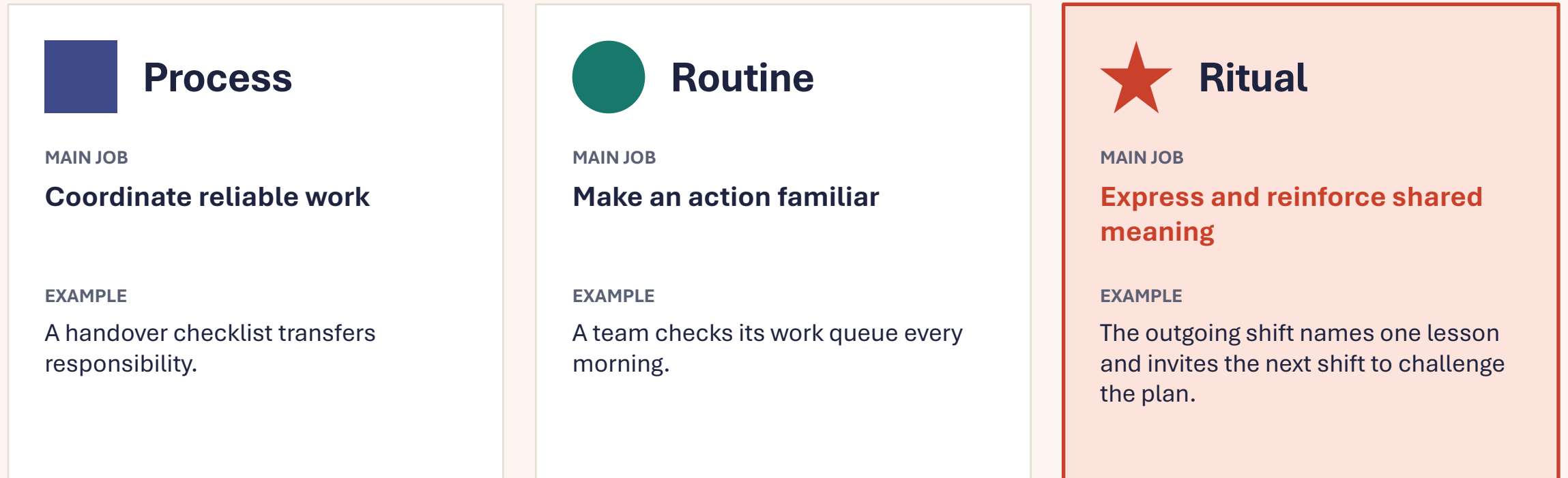


Trust builds when the response changes and people see follow-through. Repeating the question alone will not repair the pattern.

FOUNDATIONS

A ritual is a repeated practice that carries meaning

Process, routine and ritual overlap. A formal process can carry shared meaning through a repeated action.



MORE COORDINATION

MORE SHARED MEANING

Working definition: a recognisable, repeated practice that carries meaning for the people taking part.

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Research shapes the design; your pilot judges if it works here

Four findings, and what each one means for how you build a ritual.

Behaviour has conditions

S1

COM-B looks at capability, opportunity and motivation. A reminder cannot fix every barrier.

➔ Diagnose barriers before adding a ritual

Speaking up carries social risk

S2

Psychological safety is associated with team learning.

➔ Design and rehearse the leader's response

Repetition needs time

S3

Habit formation varies by person and behaviour.

➔ Treat 30 days as a review point, not a habit deadline

Reflection can improve work

S4

Structured debriefs support learning from experience. That does not validate every ceremony.

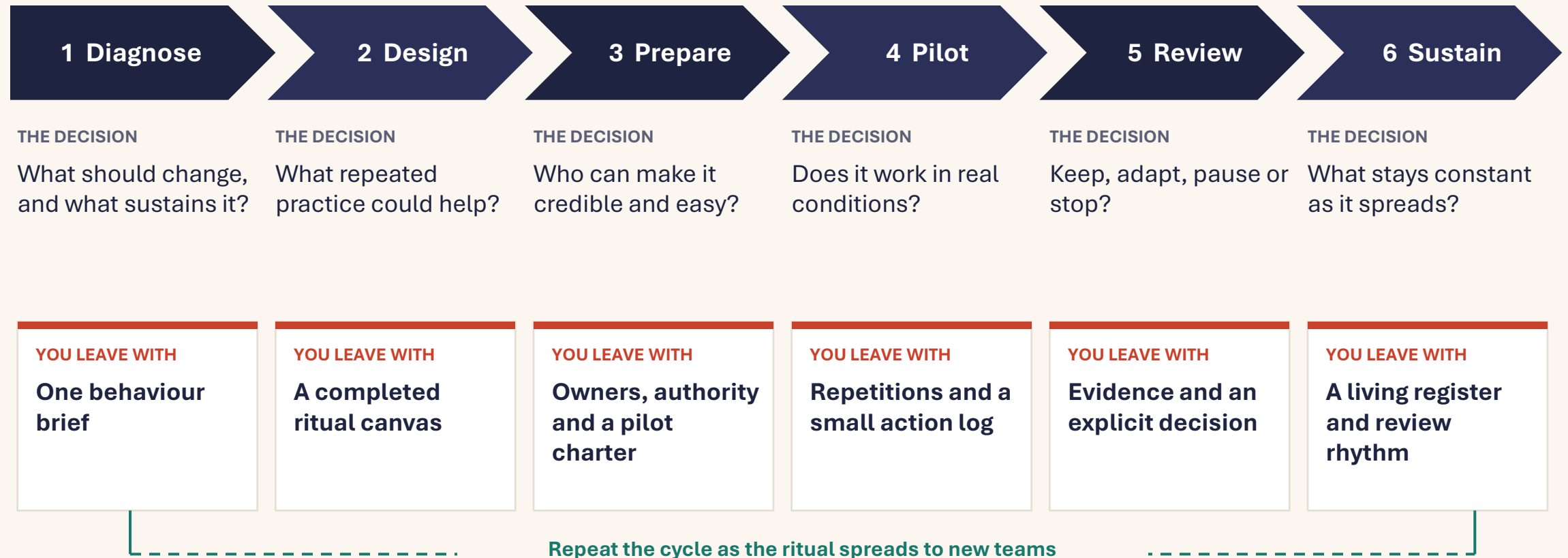
➔ Build a short reflection into the practice

Full sources and limitations are on pages 40–41.

THE OPERATING CYCLE

Six stages, each with a decision and an output

Work through them in order with one team. Each stage leaves you with something tangible.



An urgent structural fix can go ahead while the team designs its ritual.

Find the root problem beneath the request

Ask what people do now, when they do it, and what makes that response sensible where they work.

BARRIER

A QUESTION TO INVESTIGATE

LIKELY RESPONSE

Capability

“Do people know how to raise a useful risk?”



Model it. Practise with a real example.

Opportunity

“Is there time, access and authority to act?”



Repair the workflow or the decision right.

Motivation

“What happens to people who speak honestly?”



Change leadership responses and consequences.

Reinforcement

“What do targets and promotions reward?”



Align incentives with the behaviour.

Match the ritual to the barrier. A listening ritual needs a response route. An empowerment ritual needs real authority.

The behaviour brief

WORKSHEET 1

Complete it with the people who do the work. Choose one observable behaviour before naming a ritual.

1 Business consequence

What is this costing the work, customers or people?

2 Current behaviour and its cue

What do people do now, and what triggers it?

3 Desired action

Who does what, and when?

4 Conditions to change

What must the organisation fix to make this possible?

5 Baseline evidence and source

How often does it happen today? Where is it recorded?

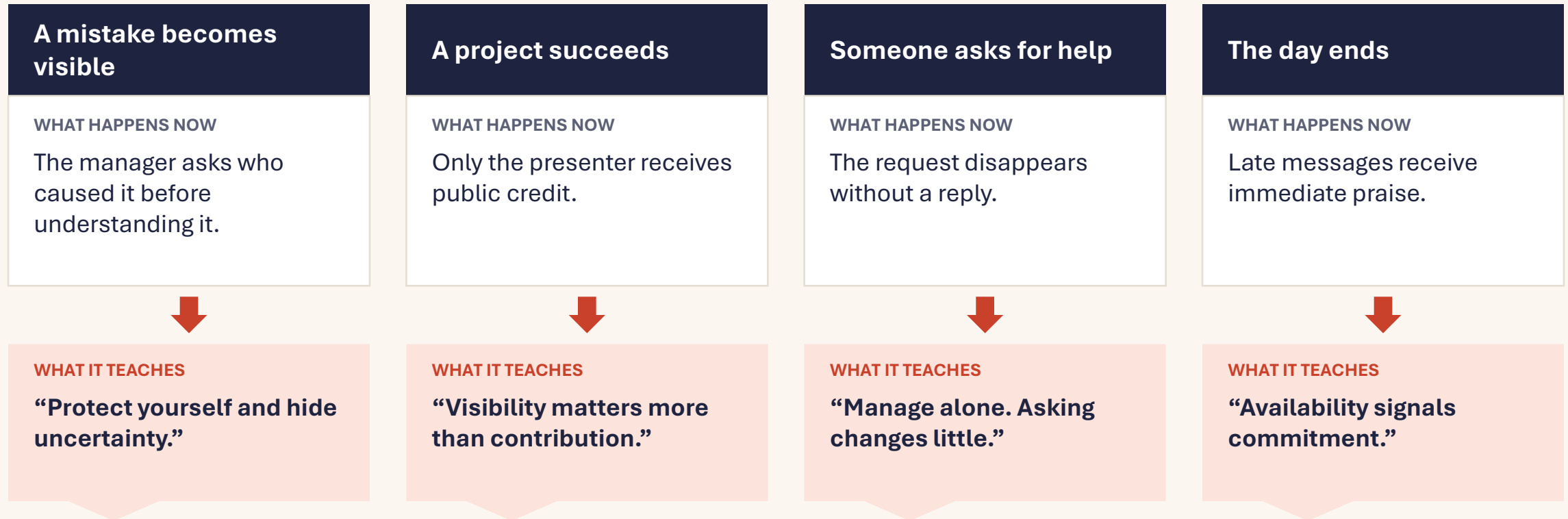
6 Outcome owner and review date

Who judges progress, and when?

Worked example: delivery risks surface before customer commitments fail, with an agreed response owner.

Your existing habits already teach people what gets rewarded

Observe a normal week before adding anything. Four common moments and the lessons they quietly teach.



For each existing practice, decide:

Keep

Redesign

Remove

Examples are diagnostic prompts, not claims about your organisation.

A ritual only works when the system lets people act

The ritual reinforces an operating choice. Check that the organisation actually permits that choice.

THE RITUAL CONTRIBUTES

THE SYSTEM MUST PROVIDE

INTENDED CHANGE

A predictable invitation and a respectful response

+

Clear escalation rights and capacity to help

=

Earlier risk reporting

A regular story about a sensible decision

+

Authority limits, access and a usable budget

=

More initiative

A short, structured review of what happened

+

Action owners and time to change the work

=

Learning from errors

A consistent closing or handover moment

+

Workload planning and emergency cover

=

Recovery after work

If the system column is empty, fix the structure first. A ritual cannot substitute for missing authority or capacity.

Choose the first pilot by score, then by gates

Rate every candidate 1–5 on three criteria, with a written reason. Then run it through the gates.

STEP 1 SCORE

Value to the work

Does it address a consequential problem?



Meaning to participants

Do the people affected see why it matters?



Practicality

Does it fit an existing moment, with an owner and a busy-week version?



STEP 2 GATES

Reject or redesign any candidate that requires:

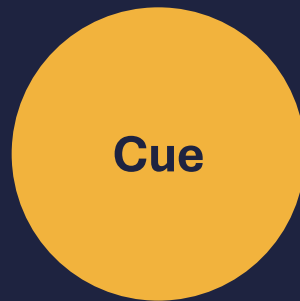
- ✗ Unsafe personal disclosure
- ✗ Authority nobody has
- ✗ Resources nobody approved

Pilot the strongest candidate that clears every gate

Votes inform the choice. Popularity does not override risk or capacity.

Every workable ritual has a cue, an action and a meaning

Four elements, held together by clear ownership and follow-through.



A specific event or moment signals that the practice begins.



People know exactly what to do, say, write or demonstrate.



Participants can explain which value the action expresses and why it matters.

Low friction The smallest useful version fits real work and needs no extra preparation.

THE OPERATING LOOP THAT KEEPS IT ALIVE



The ritual canvas: purpose and flow

WORKSHEET 2A

Complete with page 15 for each candidate. Keep the action simple enough to rehearse straight away.

1 Name and anchor value

What will you call it, and which value does it express?

2 Anti-pattern to replace

Which current habit should this displace?

3 Participants and inclusion

Who takes part? Who might be left out?

4 Cue, frequency and place

Exactly when and where does it start?

5 The steps

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6 Shared meaning

How would a participant explain why it matters?

Simplicity check: if participants cannot describe the action and its meaning, simplify the design.

The ritual canvas: making it stick

WORKSHEET 2B

A design becomes operational when someone can host it, respond to it and decide whether it helps.

1 Keeper, deputy and sponsor

Who hosts, who covers, who removes blockers?

2 Leader response and deadline

What will the leader say and do, and by when?

3 Time budget and minimum version

How long does it take? What is the busy-week version?

4 Authority, resources, barriers

What permission or budget is needed?

5 Behaviour and burden measures

What will you count? What does it cost in time?

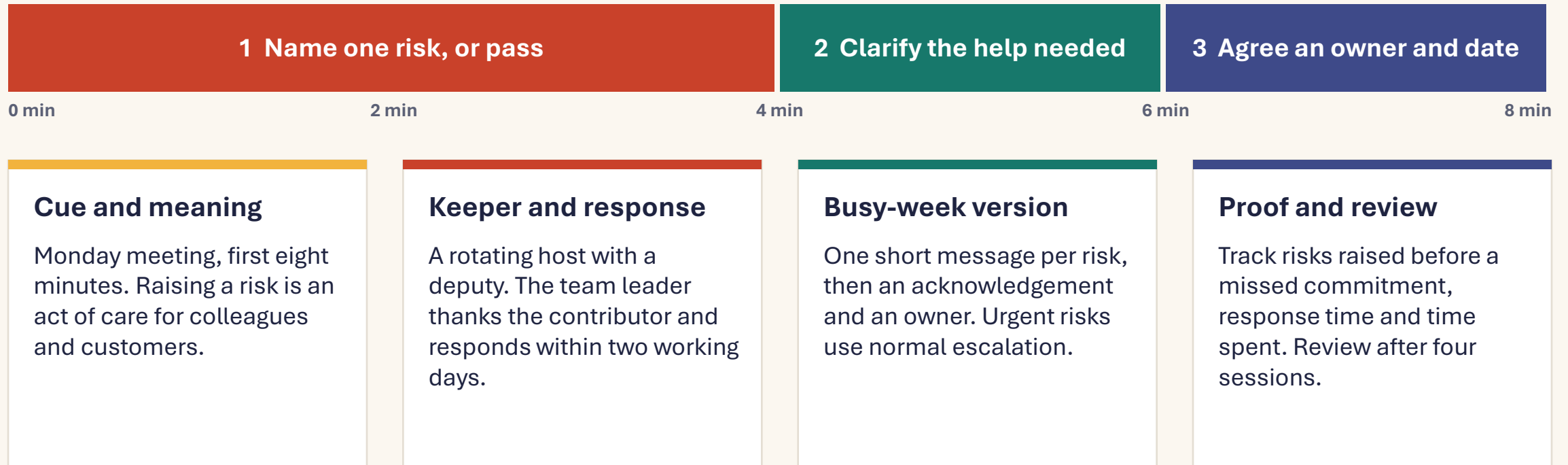
6 Pilot dates, review, stop rules

When do you start, review and stop?

Commitment check: record who will do what by when. A reminder alone is not an operating commitment.

Early Signal: an eight-minute ritual for raising risks early

Illustrative design for a six-person delivery team, run in the first eight minutes of the existing Monday meeting.



The two-working-day response target is a suggested pilot rule. Agree a realistic local standard before launch.

The leader's response decides whether honesty feels useful

Suggested language for the Early Signal ritual. Adapt it to your own voice.

1	Acknowledge	"Thank you for raising this before it became harder to fix."
2	Understand	"What are you seeing? What do we know, and what help would change the situation?"
3	Commit	"I will own this decision. We will come back to you by Thursday, even if the answer is still incomplete."
4	Close the loop	"Here is what changed, what did not, and why. Did our response help?"

Avoid public blame, premature reassurance and promises you cannot keep. Follow-through carries more weight than the script.

Build a minimum version that survives a busy week

Same meaning, same response commitment, less time. Plan it before you need it.

	Default version		Minimum useful version
Moment	Eight minutes at an existing meeting	➔	A named prompt in the team channel
Contribution	A brief spoken risk with context	➔	One sentence: risk, impact and help needed
Response	Clarify and agree an owner together	➔	Acknowledge, assign and give a reply date
Record	One row in the action log	➔	The same row, completed asynchronously

Watch for drift: if the shorter version becomes permanent, redesign the full ritual.

Rehearse once and put the design through four tests

Run one real example with the team. Watch the action and the response rather than debating the name.



The newcomer test

Could a new colleague understand what to do and why, without a long explanation?



The pressure test

Does the minimum version still work during leave, a customer crisis or a shift change?



The power test

What happens if the quietest person challenges the most senior one? Can someone pass?



The consequence test

Does a contribution produce help, a decision or learning? Who owns the next step?

Change any design that creates more exposure than support. Rehearse again after a material change.

The pilot charter

WORKSHEET 3

Agree one team, one ritual, and a review after enough real occurrences to learn from.

1 Team, ritual, target behaviour

2 Sponsor, outcome owner, hosts

3 Start, frequency, review date

4 Response standard, resources

5 Baseline and measures

6 Decision rules and owner

YOUR HYPOTHESIS

If we repeat **[action]** at **[cue]**, then **[behaviour]** should become easier because **[mechanism]**.

Share ownership so nobody has to police the culture

Five roles, each with a clear accountability and a rhythm.

Leader sponsor	Outcome owner	Ritual Keeper + deputy	Participants	HR / culture partner
Removes structural barriers, models the response and authorises resources.	Checks whether the target behaviour and work outcome improve.	Hosts, protects the time budget and keeps the action log.	Shape the practice. Contribute, challenge and suggest changes.	Supports inclusion, facilitation and safe escalation.
RHYTHM At launch and review	RHYTHM Weekly during pilot	RHYTHM Every occurrence	RHYTHM Every occurrence	RHYTHM At agreed checkpoints

The Keeper makes participation easier. Management keeps responsibility for workload, safety and business decisions.

A launch message people can believe

Explain the problem and the response commitment before you introduce the ritual's name.

● ● ● To: the team Subject: A small experiment, starting [date]

We have noticed **[specific pattern]** and its effect on **[people or work]**.

For **[pilot period]**, we will test **[ritual]** with **[team]** at **[existing cue]**. It takes **[time]** and asks us to **[observable action]**.

[Keeper] will host. **[Leader]** will respond by **[agreed deadline]**. We will record agreed actions, owners and dates. Personal disclosures are optional. Urgent or sensitive matters can use **[appropriate route]**.

We will review on **[date]**, using **[behaviour measure]**, **[work outcome]** and your feedback on effort and usefulness. We may keep, change or stop it.

Our first session is **[date/time]**. Please help us make it useful.

BEFORE YOU SEND

1

Fill every bracket

A message with gaps reads as a template, not a commitment.

2

Lead with the problem

People need to see why before they see what.

3

Promise a response

Name who replies, and by when.

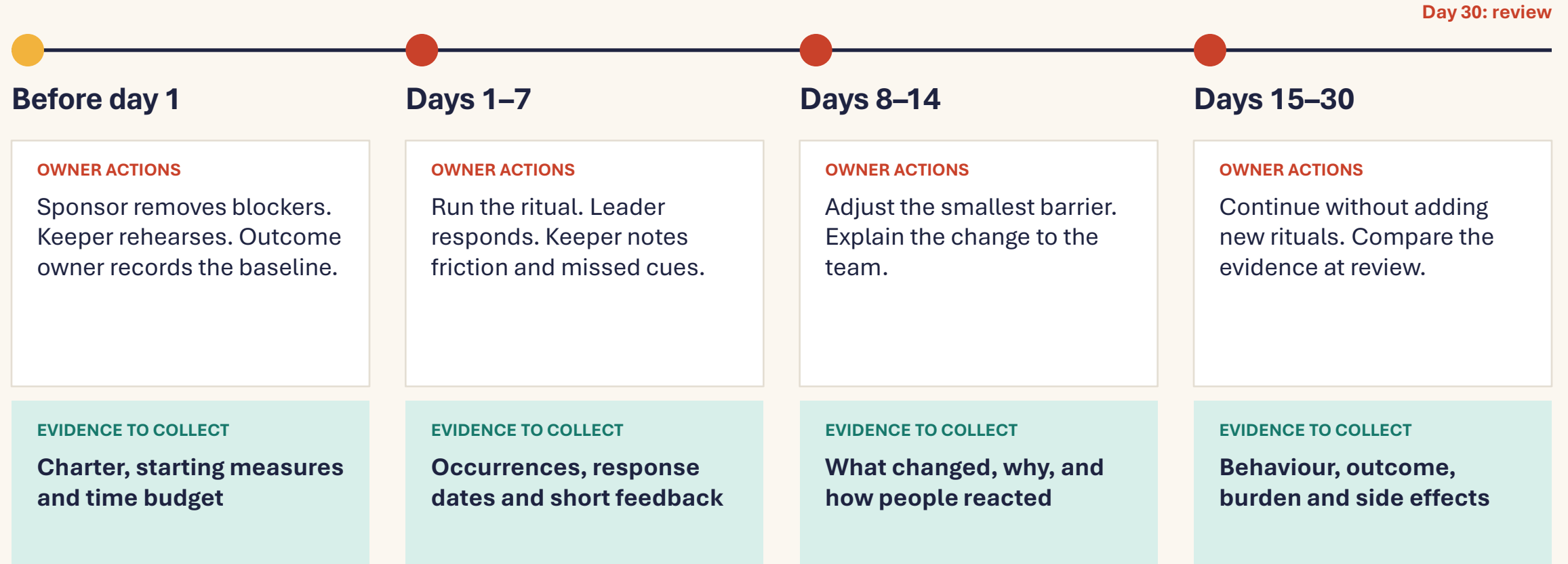
4

Make the exit visible

Saying you may stop it makes trying it safer.

The first 30 days: run it, adjust one thing, compare

Who does what in each phase, and the evidence to collect along the way.



A weekly ritual gives only about four repetitions in four weeks. Extend the test if the evidence is too thin.

The follow-through log

Record only what you need to act. This is a shared commitments log, not a transcript of personal disclosures.

Date and issue	Agreed next step	Owner and due date	Status and evidence

CLOSE THE LOOP AT THE NEXT OCCURRENCE

- Completed
- Changed
- Declined, with a reason
- Escalated to a named owner

Five signals tell you whether the ritual is working

Use defined periods and denominators, so each number answers one decision.

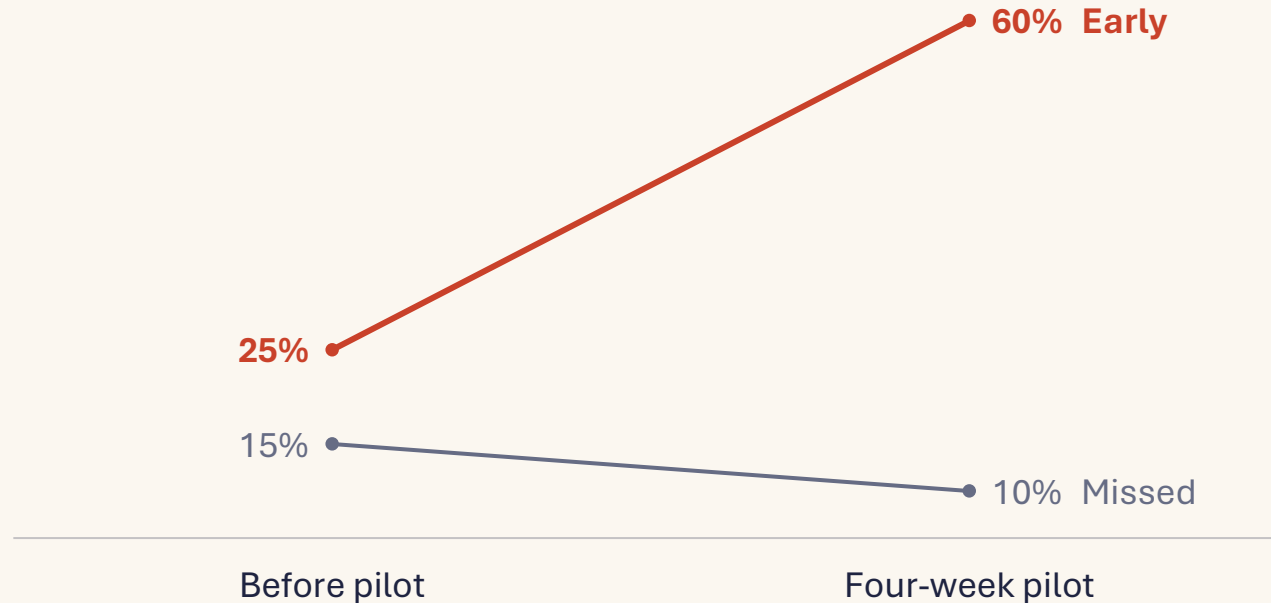


Expect a spike: more reported problems early on can mean better visibility, not worse performance.

In this illustrative pilot, early risk-raising rose from 25% to 60%

Synthetic teaching data. The figures show how to read a scorecard, not an actual client result.

Share of risks raised before a commitment failed, and of commitments missed, %



Early: risks raised before a commitment failed (2 of 8, then 6 of 10). Missed: delivery commitments missed (3 of 20, then 2 of 20).

A useful signal for another test, not proof of causation. Record preparation and follow-up time separately from meeting time.

80%

responses within the agreed deadline

8 of 10 due; no baseline

4 of 4

scheduled sessions completed

Reliability held

192

person-minutes in meetings

6 people × 8 min × 4 sessions

End every pilot with one decision: keep, adapt, pause or stop

Set the local decision rules before launch. These are suggested criteria, not research benchmarks.

Keep

EVIDENCE THAT COULD JUSTIFY IT

Useful behaviour appears, responses follow and the burden stays within the agreed limit.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Continue, with a named review date.

Adapt

EVIDENCE THAT COULD JUSTIFY IT

The purpose matters, but timing, access or the action creates avoidable friction.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Change one element and retest.

Pause

EVIDENCE THAT COULD JUSTIFY IT

Harm, retaliation, unsafe disclosure or unresolved critical barriers appear.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Protect people and fix the condition.

Stop

EVIDENCE THAT COULD JUSTIFY IT

The practice adds effort without useful change after a fair test.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Explain the learning and remove it.

An incomplete pilot can justify extending the test. It cannot justify claiming success.

When the ritual starts to fail, look at the design first

Ask what the practice makes easy, difficult or personally risky before you blame motivation.

IF YOU NOTICE

THE LIKELY DESIGN ISSUE

TRY THIS

People attend but stay silent



Speaking feels costly or the prompt is unclear.



Repair the leader response. Offer a private route.

The Keeper keeps chasing



The cue is weak or the practice adds too much work.



Embed it in an existing moment. Cut preparation.

The same people get recognised



Visibility or popularity drives the choices.



Name specific contributions, including less visible work.

Actions pile up



The ritual surfaces more than leaders can handle.



Limit scope and clear the backlog before expanding.

The numbers look too perfect



People may be optimising the measure.



Check examples and exceptions. Remove public rankings.

Openness is earned through conduct, never demanded

Four boundaries that keep participation safe. A ritual should never require a performance of vulnerability.

Choice over personal content

People may pass on personal questions. Offer a work-focused or private alternative, without penalty.

Safety before visibility

Never use public rituals for harassment, retaliation or serious misconduct. Provide a protected route and accountable action.

Data with a purpose

Explain what you record, who can see it and when you delete it. Keep personal stories out of open logs.

Inclusion by design

Check language, accessibility, shift patterns, cultural preferences and caring duties before choosing the format.

Change the format freely; keep the meaning and the response

A ritual travels well when its core survives, even if the local format changes.

Frontline or shift work	Remote or hybrid	Across time zones	Multilingual team
ADAPT THE FORMAT Use handover time and accessible materials, during paid work.	ADAPT THE FORMAT One shared prompt with an agreed response window.	ADAPT THE FORMAT Rotate live times or use an asynchronous sequence.	ADAPT THE FORMAT Plain language, examples and translation where needed.
PRESERVE THE CORE A chance to contribute and a clear response owner	PRESERVE THE CORE Equal attention to spoken and written contributions	PRESERVE THE CORE No permanent inconvenience for the same group	PRESERVE THE CORE Everyone understands the action and its purpose

Dashed: flexible to local needs. Solid: the part that must not change.

Five supports keep a ritual repeating after the pilot

Each support has a concrete action and a named owner.



Protect the purpose. Never make participation in an optional personal ritual a promotion or performance criterion.

A living ritual register

A short register prevents forgotten owners, duplicated practices and rituals that outlive their purpose.

Ritual and purpose	Core and local variation	Owner and next review	Decision

Scale only after useful repetitions in different conditions. Share the mechanism and the evidence, then let the next team adapt it.

Start with what you have; add a tool when the practice needs it

Choose tools for access and useful responses. Agree data visibility before launch.

THE NEED

START LIGHT

WHEN MORE SUPPORT HELPS

Prompts and commitments

An existing agenda and a shared action log



When teams cannot reliably see owners or responses

Daily listening and recognition

A consistent question and specific peer appreciation



Happily.ai offers check-ins, recognition, insights and AI guidance

Culture diagnosis and intervention

Interviews, work evidence and a behaviour brief



Büdaya combines employee insights with culture design and sustained support

Büdaya is a tool that is used as part of the Leaderonomics ecosystem. The tool follows the practice, never the other way round. Leaderonomics has evolved its eco-system to include numerous ventures, including in the cybersecurity, space, tech and learning spaces. Although each venture is in a complex and diverse industry, they are all knit together into the Leaderonomics eco-system through Büdaya

Four starting points for common problems

Pick by the behaviour you want and your context, then complete a canvas.

PROBLEM Problems surface too late	PROBLEM Good work stays invisible	PROBLEM Teams repeat mistakes	PROBLEM Expertise stays in silos
Early Signal Name a risk and agree a response.	Contribution Story Name an action and who it helped.	Ten-minute Debrief Compare intent, reality and one change.	The Clasp Match a real request with another team's strength.
EVIDENCE TO WATCH Risks raised before commitments fail	EVIDENCE TO WATCH Range and specificity of recognised work	EVIDENCE TO WATCH Agreed improvements applied next time	EVIDENCE TO WATCH Requests that produce useful cross-team help

The Clasp adapts the From Values to Rituals workshop run by Roshan Thiran in partnership with the Būdaya Team. Debrief design draws on research from Roshan's extensive culture research and Etsy's documented practices.

Restorative rituals help only when real support comes with them

Restorative rituals follow an old pattern of rest and renewal: a regular pause from work so people can heal what strain has worn down, repair what has broken between them, and come back whole. Without that pause, pressure only builds. The symbolic release must still sit alongside practical action on its causes.

THE RITUAL

A PRACTICAL ADAPTATION

IT ONLY WORKS WITH

 The Morning Anchor	A brief arrival check-in at an existing start moment. Passing is welcome.	Belonging without forced disclosure
 The Story Feast	A shared story about a hard lesson and the people who helped.	Learning without blame or hero worship
 The Pace Check	Before a planning cycle, name what to stop or resource differently.	Authority to change workload and priorities
 The Threshold Wash	A personal closing gesture after a clear handover.	Real off-duty cover and realistic workloads

Adapt the principle to your own organizational context and situation. And feel free to make it your own, but do credit Būdaya/Roshan Thiran when appropriate

The Ritual Keeper's weekly check

Five minutes of preparation and follow-up keeps the practice from becoming another coordination burden.

CHECK

ATTENTION NEEDED · OWNER · DATE

☐

Next cue and deputy confirmed

☐

Prompt and minimum version ready

☐

Previous commitments received a response

☐

Safe routes to contribute or pass

☐

Time and behaviour signal recorded

☐

Changes or concerns for the sponsor

Escalate what you cannot fix. Hosting a ritual does not make you responsible for every issue it reveals.

THE NEXT 90 DAYS

From one pilot to a practice worth repeating

Ninety days, three phases and one deliberate decision.



DAYS 1–30

Establish the practice

Run a small pilot. Look for the intended behaviour, credible responses and an acceptable time cost.



DAYS 31–60

Strengthen the conditions

If the review supports it, remove remaining friction and test whether a deputy can host.



DAYS 61–90

Test transfer

Invite one other willing team to adapt it. Compare what survives and what needs local change.



DAY 90

Make a deliberate choice

Continue, redesign, extend the evidence or retire it. Keep a named owner and the next review date.

Culture takes shape in what happens next, repeatedly.

EVIDENCE AND FURTHER READING

Sources: behaviour and learning

All of the tools and processes come from the Ritual Library and the Culture research library owned by Roshan Thiran and by our culture partner, Būdaya. Additional research for this playbook comes from the sources below. Roshan Thiran's wider research is published on Leaderonomics.com.

WHAT IT SHOWS AND DOES NOT SHOW

S1 **Michie, van Stralen & West (2011)**

The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*, 6, 42.

COM-B is a design framework. It does not establish that a particular workplace ritual will work.

S2 **Edmondson (1999)**

Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.

Field study of 51 manufacturing teams. Psychological safety was associated with learning behaviour; this is not proof that a check-in causes safety.

S3 **Lally et al. (2010), with Lally's 2026 clarification**

How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 998–1009.

Daily health behaviours showed highly variable formation times. Neither 21 nor 66 days is a universal workplace rule.

Research informs the mechanisms. The worksheets and operating rules are practical recommendations, not validated scales and the copyright and IP for all of it belongs to Roshan Thiran and Būdaya, our partner.

EVIDENCE AND FURTHER READING

Sources: rituals in organisations

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S4

Tannenbaum & Cerasoli (2013)

Do team and individual debriefs enhance performance? A meta-analysis. Human Factors, 55(1), 231–245.

WHAT IT SHOWS AND DOES NOT SHOW

46 samples, 2,136 participants. Structured debriefs generally improved effectiveness against controls; this does not quantify every ritual's effect.

S5

Zakhour & Hadley (2025)

How Team Rituals Can Enhance Life at Work. Cosmic Centaurs and Institute for Life at Work. Research report.

Survey of 929 people in 60 countries, plus a small four-team field study. Supports local testing, not universal causal promises.

S6

Allspaw / Etsy (2012)

Blameless PostMortems and a Just Culture. Code as Craft. A documented organisational practice.

A practitioner account of learning from incidents while keeping responsibility for improvement. No isolated performance effect is established.



RITUALS OF WORK

Repeat what matters.
Respond to what you hear.
Review what works.

All information and practice designs in this playbook are adapted from **Roshan Thiran's From Values to Rituals workshop.**

For more information, contact Roshan at roshan.thiran@budaya.app

ritualsofwork.com in partnership with [Büdaya.app](https://budaya.app)

