

FIELD GUIDE TOOL #17

The Change Reinforcement Diagnostic

Chapter 17: Reinforcement Loops: Making Change Stick

DATE _____ COMPLETED BY _____

SITUATION _____

Use this tool when launching or assessing a significant behavioral change. Complete Part A before the launch to design the reinforcement architecture. Use Parts B and C to diagnose and address reversion during implementation.

When to use it. Best used when a change has launched and the question is whether it will hold.

Part A: Pre-Launch Reinforcement Design

For each of the four reinforcement levers, define the specific action you will take.

Lever	Specific action and timing
Leader behavior: How will you visibly and consistently model the new standard?	
Response to deviation: What is your specific response when the standard is not met?	
Structural embedding: What system, process, or template change makes the new behavior easiest?	
Recognition: How specifically will you acknowledge exemplary implementation?	
Legacy retirement: What specifically will be retired to remove the path back to the old behavior?	

Part B: Resistance Diagnosis

If you are seeing resistance or reversion, use this diagnostic before deciding on a response.

Question	Your assessment
What specific behavior is not happening that should be?	
Is this a capability gap? (People lack the skill to implement the new behavior efficiently.)	
Is this a clarity gap? (People are uncertain what the new standard requires in their specific context.)	
Is this a conviction gap? (People are not persuaded the change is worth the effort.)	
Based on the gap type, what is the appropriate response?	

Part C: The Reinforcement Timeline

Define the specific reinforcement activities for each phase of implementation.

Phase	Planned reinforcement activities
Weeks 1–3: Adoption phase. Intensive modeling, instruction, and immediate feedback.	
Weeks 4–8: Vulnerability phase. Highest regression risk. Structural embedding, deviation response, early recognition.	
Months 3–6: Consolidation phase. Results become their own reinforcement. Identify and share early wins.	
Months 6–12: Standardization phase. Embed in processes, metrics, and onboarding.	
What leading indicator will tell you early whether the change is taking hold?	

Part D: The Regression Check

Use this quarterly to assess whether a change that was launched is holding.

Question	Current State
Is the new behavior being practiced consistently across the team, or only by some members?	
Have any deviations gone unaddressed in the last 30 days?	
Is the legacy infrastructure (templates, processes, metrics) that supported the old behavior still accessible?	
Is the change being referenced in regular leadership communications and reviews?	
Overall regression risk (Low / Medium / High) and primary driver:	

Before moving to Chapter 18, confirm:

- ☐ You have defined specific actions for all four reinforcement levers for a current or upcoming change.
- ☐ You have identified the legacy infrastructure that needs to be retired to prevent regression.
- ☐ You have built a reinforcement timeline covering all four implementation phases.
- ☐ You have applied the resistance diagnosis to any current reversion and identified the gap type.