

Appendix E

MBFC + SH Friction Library

Purpose

This appendix provides a reference library of common friction patterns found in organizations. Its purpose is not to prescribe solutions, but to help identify recurring patterns of Waste, Defects, Delays, Cost, Risk, and Frustration. Most organizational friction is not unique; it appears in predictable forms across industries, functions, and company sizes. Recognizing these patterns helps accelerate diagnosis and improve the quality of improvement efforts.

Core Principle

Friction is often structural rather than isolated. Many problems that appear unique are variations of common system patterns.

Category 1: Process Friction

Process friction occurs when workflows are more complex than necessary or contain unnecessary steps. Common patterns include:

Process Friction	Examples
Excess approvals	Low-risk decisions require multiple approvals
Repeated data entry	Same information entered multiple times
Manual handoffs	Work transfers requiring unnecessary intervention
Obsolete steps	Activities with no clear current purpose
Ownership gaps	Work pauses between departments

Typical Impact:

- Delays increase
- Errors accumulate
- Frustration rises
- Flow efficiency decreases

If this process were designed from scratch today, would it look the same?

Category 2: Decision Friction

Decision friction occurs when decisions take longer or require more effort than the value of the decision justifies. Common patterns include:

Decision Friction	Examples
Approval inflation	Low-value decisions requiring high-level approval
Unclear ownership	Decision authority is ambiguous
Escalation loops	Repeated escalation cycles
Meeting overload	Excessive meetings for simple determinations
Missing criteria	Lack of decision criteria or standards

Typical Impact:

- Slow responsiveness
- Reduced accountability
- Increased organizational latency

Does the value of the decision justify the effort required to make it?

Category 3: Information Friction

Information friction occurs when data is difficult to access, interpret, or trust. Common patterns include:

Information Friction	Examples
Multiple versions	Different versions of the same report
Disconnected systems	Data stored across separate systems
Manual reporting	Information compiled manually
Delayed visibility	Performance data not available when needed
Misaligned metrics	Functions use inconsistent measures

Typical Impact:

- Poor decision quality
- Rework and duplication
- Reduced confidence in data

Can people access the information they need when they need it?

Category 4: Structural Friction

Structural friction arises from how the organization is designed. Common patterns include:

Structural Friction	Examples
Misaligned incentives	Departments rewarded for conflicting outcomes
Overlapping responsibilities	Multiple groups responsible for the same work
Undefined ownership	Accountability for outcomes is unclear
Excessive hierarchy	Too many organizational layers
Functional silos	Coordination between functions is difficult

Typical Impact:

- Internal conflict increases
- Optimization becomes local rather than system-wide
- Coordination cost rises

Are responsibility and accountability aligned?

Category 5: Behavioral Friction

Behavioral friction emerges from how people interact with systems and each other. Common patterns include:

Behavioral Friction	Examples
Process workarounds	Employees bypass formal processes
System avoidance	Tools are avoided because they are inefficient
Escalation avoidance	Issues are not raised when they should be
Informal substitutes	Informal processes replace formal ones
Complexity resistance	People resist systems that have become overly complex

Typical Impact:

- Shadow systems emerge
- Process reliability decreases
- Organizational alignment weakens

Are people following the process or working around it?

Category 6: Legacy Friction

Legacy friction occurs when past decisions remain in place without re-evaluation. Common patterns include:

Legacy Friction	Examples
Obsolete policies	Policies remain after the original problem changes
Persistent controls	Controls added during past incidents are never revisited
Orphaned reports	Reports or meetings continue without clear ownership
Outdated systems	Systems built for constraints that no longer exist
Permanent temporary fixes	Temporary solutions become permanent infrastructure

Typical Impact:

- Complexity increases over time
- Organizational agility decreases
- Friction compounds silently

Does the original reason for this still exist?

Using the Friction Library

When friction is identified, it can often be mapped to one or more of these categories. This helps clarify whether the issue is:

- Isolated
- Systemic
- Structural
- Accumulated over time

Most importantly, it helps identify whether similar friction exists elsewhere in the organization.

Closing Perspective

Organizations rarely suffer from unknown problems. They suffer from known patterns that are not consistently recognized as patterns. The value of a friction library is not in listing problems, but in making recurring problems easier to recognize and address.