

The System Assumption Audit

Pick a system in your business. Seriously. One. Then use these six questions to look at what it was meant to do, what it assumes about people, and what those assumptions may be producing.

1. What were we trying to accomplish?

What problem was this system designed to solve? What experience was it intended to create for the people inside it? Is that still what we need the system to do?

2. What does this system appear to assume?

Think about the people who use it, work inside it or experience it. What would we have to believe about them to design it this way?

3. How is the system designed around those assumptions?

Look at the rules, steps, defaults, permissions, handoffs, measurements and incentives. What does the system make easier or harder?

4. What shows up?

What does the system make visible, measure, categorize, remember and surface? What disappears?

5. What do people do?

What do they embrace, avoid, work around, game, hide or abandon? What is it like to be the person inside this system?

6. What do we conclude?

What do we decide their behavior tells us about them?

THEN ASK THE QUESTION THAT CLOSSES THE LOOP

Did the system help create the behavior we're now using as evidence about the person?

Then there's really only one question left:

What, if anything, should we do about it?