

Hybrid Webinar

Strategic Empathy

Rehumanising Project Governance

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Strategic Empathy

Rehumanising Project
Governance



What is the biggest cause of Project Governance failure based on your experience?

- Strategy looks strong but trade-offs are avoided
- Reporting replaces operational truth
- Incentives reward “looking in control” rather than being in control
- PMOs sit too far from delivery reality
- Risks are only recognised once they are measurable
- Escalation exists structurally but not culturally
- Leaders are too removed from execution
- Governance focuses on audit defensibility instead of delivery survivability
- Dashboards sanitise signal instead of exposing friction



STRATEGIC EMPATHY



**Strategic Empathy:
Navigating the
Complexities of
Project Governance**



Why Strategic Empathy?



Project Governance provides **Hindsight** instead of **Foresight**



Projects are in constant **flux** while Project Governance is **static**

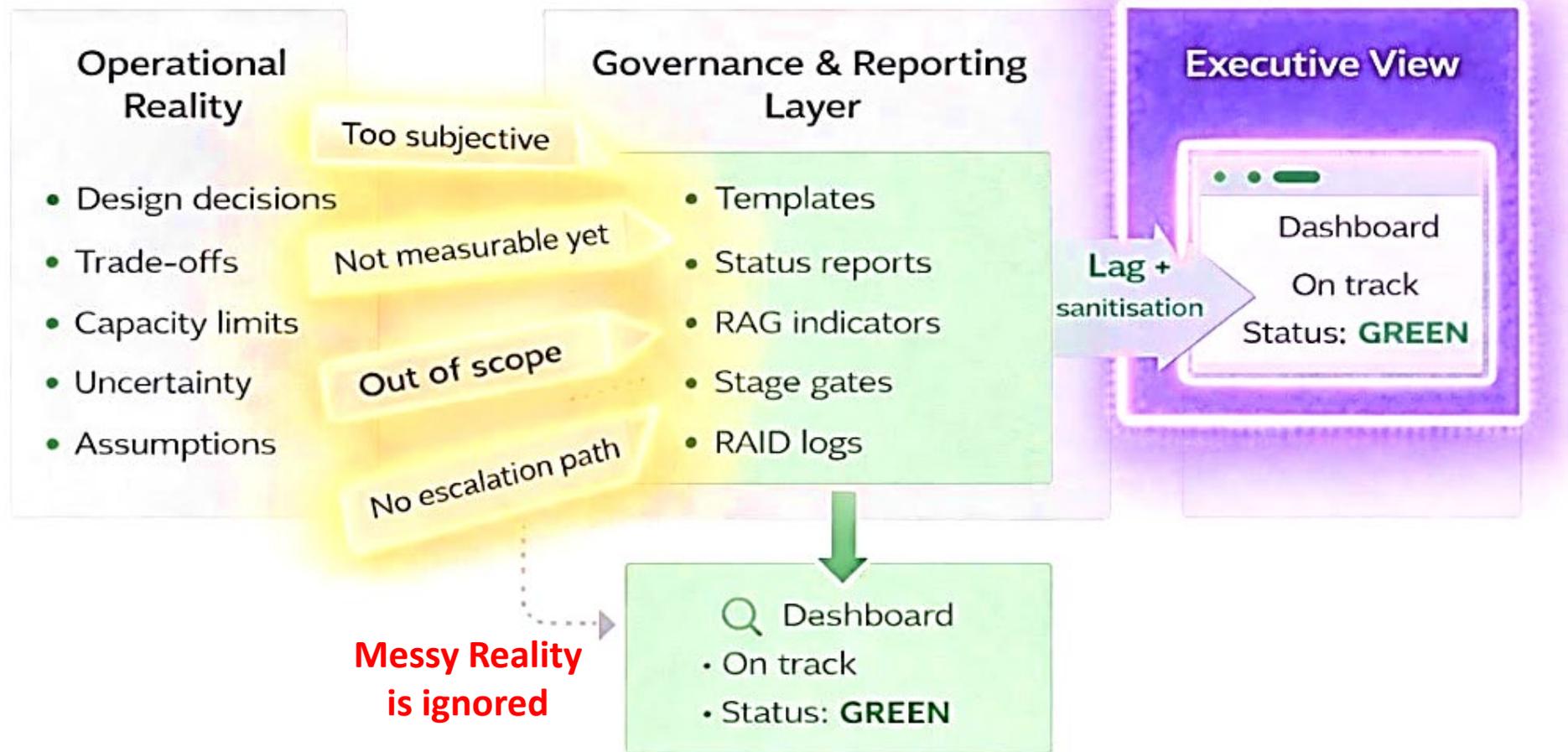


We have outsourced decision making to quantitative data ... **what about qualitative data?**



Time removes **optionality**

Why the PMO model stopped preventing failure



**Projects don't fail suddenly.
They fail slowly — while reporting green.**



The Governance Gap

The Gap No Dashboard Shows

Leadership

“Why wasn’t this flagged earlier?”

- Green dashboard
- Clean reporting
- No visible escalation

Signal Breaks Here

“We raised it... but nobody listened.”

Delivery Teams

- Friction
- Workarounds
- Escalated informally
- Reframed as “monitoring”

Drift begins when signals cannot travel.



The Moment Projects Miss

THE STAGE MOST
PROJECTS ARE MISSING

NOTICING

Legitimising weak signals
while reality is still moving.

Most projects respond to reality
only after it has already shifted.

Noticing Requires Attention



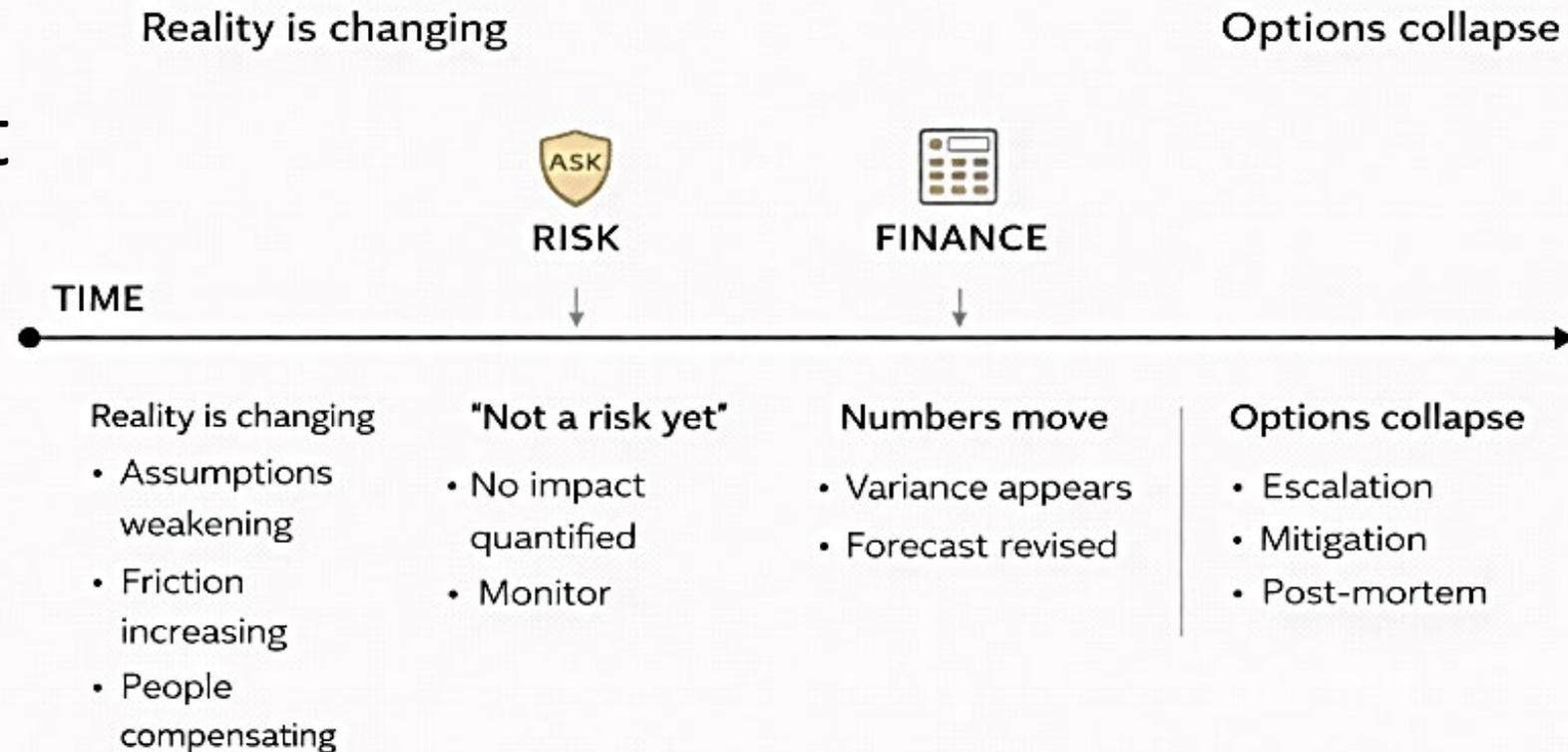
“Knowledge isn't
free. You have to pay
attention.”

— Richard P. Feynman



Why risk management and finance don't save us.

Risk and finance wake up too late



Both systems respond after reality has already shifted.



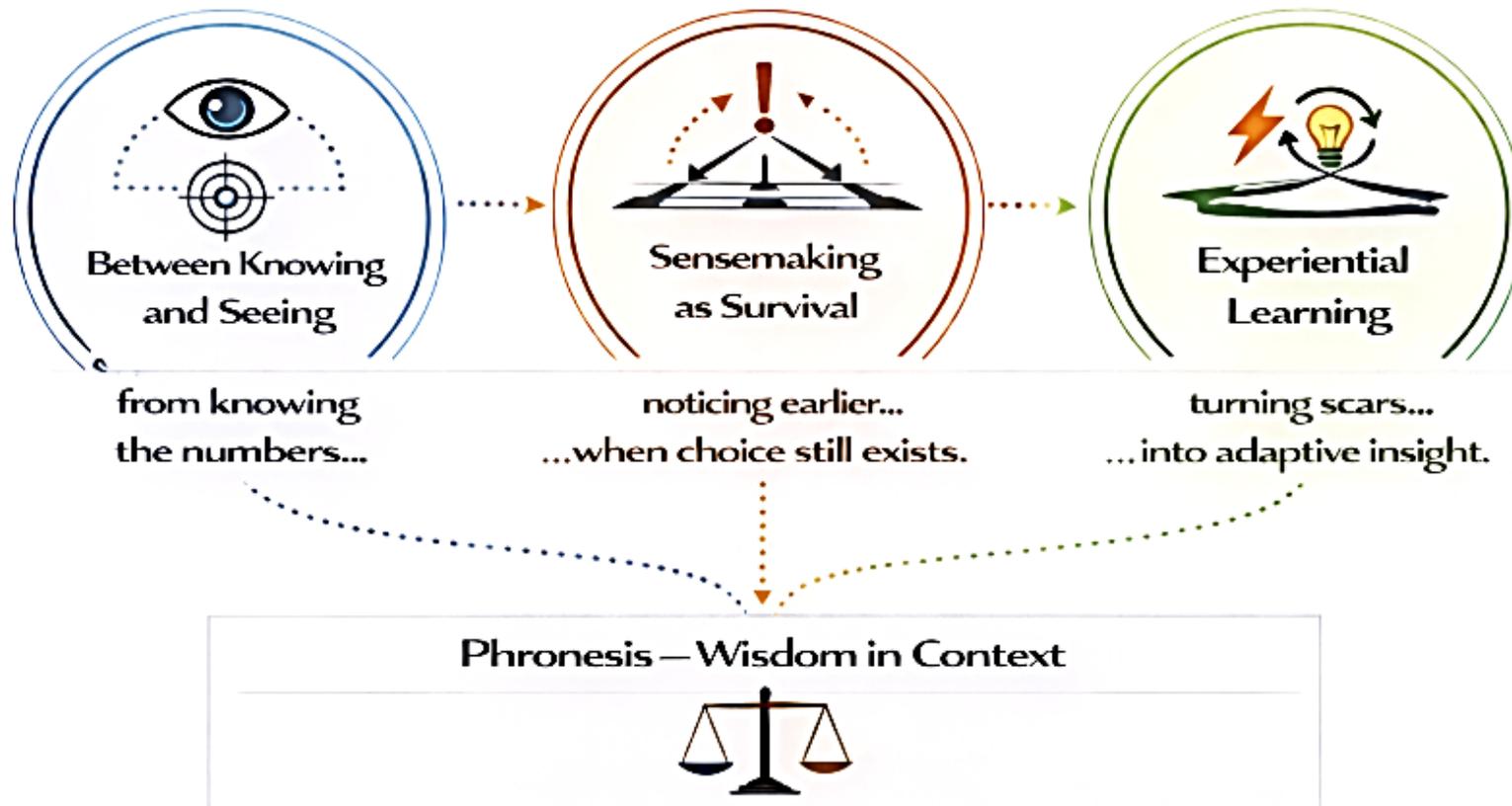
Where Early Warning Signals Go to Die...

When sensemaking is missing



A New Way Of Seeing

The Philosophy of Strategic Empathy





When Strategic Empathy is present

Where
Early
Warning
Signals Turn
To Action...



Sensemaking replaces reporting.
Learning replaces drift.



From Reporting Office to Sensemaking Engine

The PMO's Role in Strategic Empathy

Timing Shift

Traditional PMO

Reporting-Led

- Status aggregation
- Template compliance
- Retrospective assurance
- Escalation without authority

Information flows up.
Decisions stall.

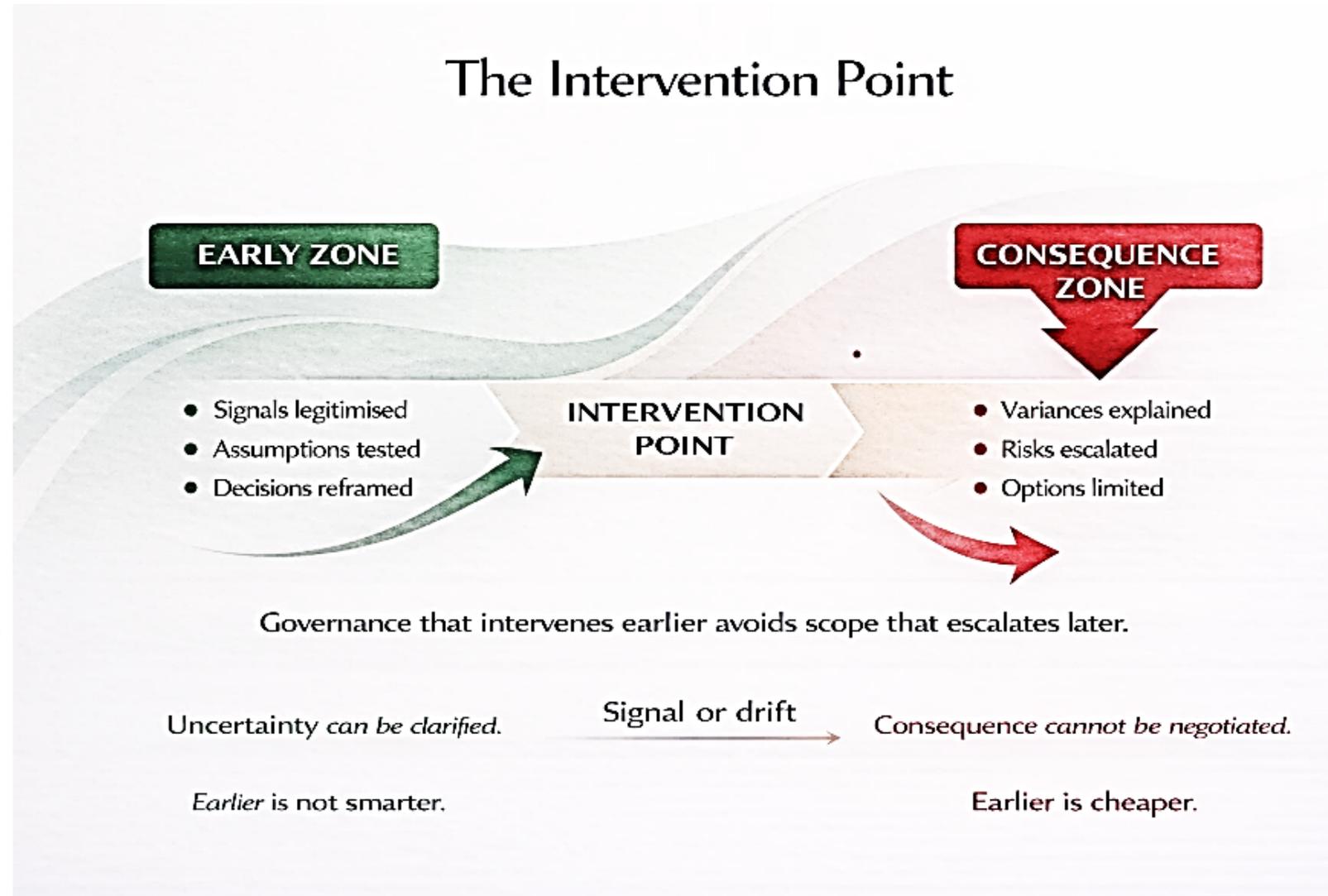
Strategic Empathy-Enabled PMO

Sensemaking-Led

- Signal amplification
- Assumption testing
- Early decision framing
- Authority alignment

Meaning flows across.
Decisions move earlier.

Where does Strategic Empathy intervene — in time and in governance



What Governance Should Take Seriously — and Why It Changes Outcomes

How Strategic Empathy Changes Governance

What gets taken seriously?

Repeated friction



“Same issue raised
in three places
= agenda-worthy”

When is escalation allowed?

Uncertainty itself



“Escalate when
assumptions fracture —
— not just when risk is
quantified”

What question is asked?

Hidden work



“What’s being adapted
just to keep progress
appearing stable?”

Governance shifts from tolerating drift to exposing real-time dynamics.

Before Failure Becomes Measurable

Delivery Reality	Early Signals	Early Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A design constraint is quietly worked around• Schedule holds, effort increases• Teams compensate to “keep progress moving”• Risks logged as “monitoring”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Same workaround mentioned in multiple forums• Different functions tell the same story differently• Decisions deferred “until clearer”• Confidence sounds rehearsed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drift review triggered• Pause authority used on one decision• Assumptions made explicit• Governance adjusts cadence or scope
<i>Nothing looks broken yet.</i>	<i>This is not noise. This is drift forming.</i>	No escalation. No re-plan. <i>Just timing.</i>

This is not escalation. This is intervention while options *still* exist.



The Questions Dashboards Can't Answer

- ❑ **1. Where are people compensating to keep progress looking stable?**
Workarounds • overtime • shortcuts • heroic effort
Progress maintained through strain is not progress.

- ❑ **2. Which assumptions are no longer holding?**
Capacity • design stability • dependency timing • reversibility
When assumptions erode silently, plans harden dangerously.

- ❑ **3. Where is adaptation happening without authority?**
Informal decisions • shadow prioritisation • absorbed risk
Adaptation without authority is an early warning of governance failure.

Milestones describe what happened.

System behaviour reveals what is about to break.

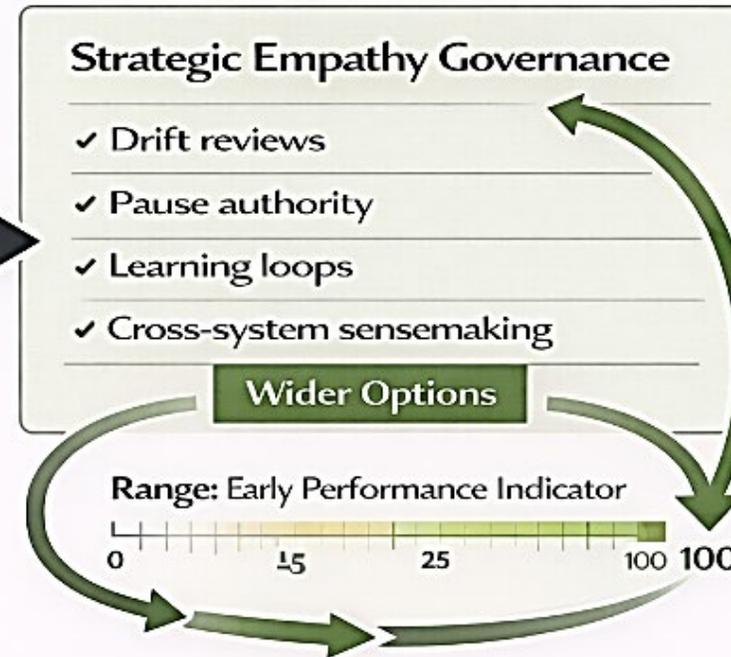
Reimagining Governance

How Strategic Empathy Changes Governance

Drift Goes Undetected



Drift Spotted Early

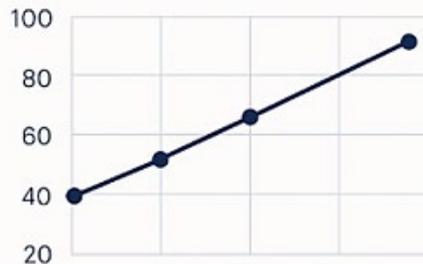


Earlier Signals, Better Governance.

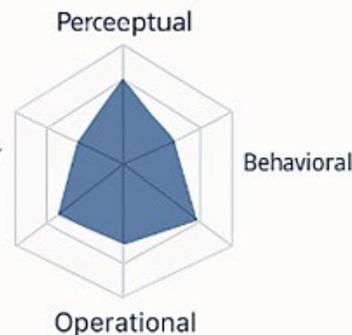
Introducing the Empathy Performance Indicators (EPI)



EPI Score



Bvhvior



Key Reflection Notes

What Strategic Empathy Diagnoses

How well the system notices itself

Empathy Performance Indicator

PERCEPTUAL Are weak signals detected early?

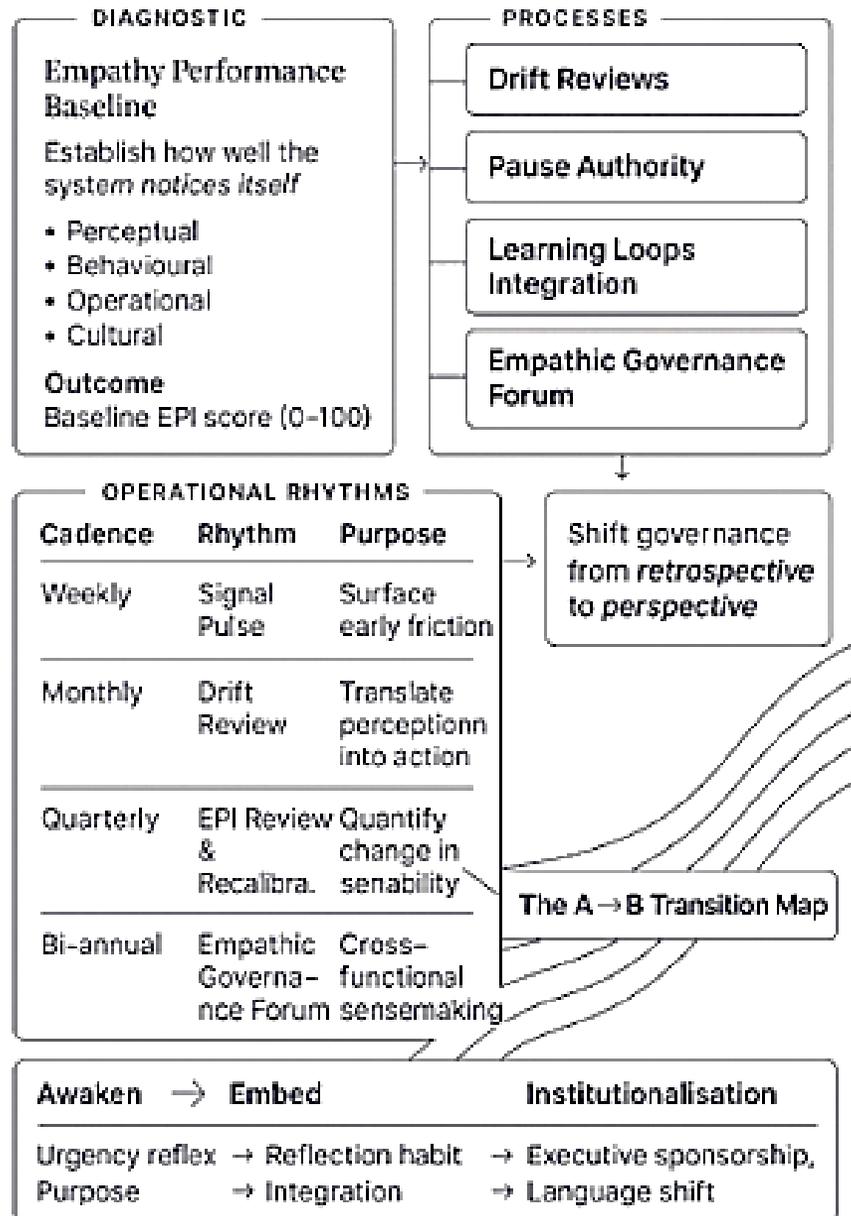
BEHAVIOURAL How does the system respond to discomfort?

OPERATIONAL How quickly does insight turn into action?

CULTURAL Is reflection safe and reinforced?

Output: EPI Score (0-100)

From reporting to sensing. From control to coherence



1 Diagnostic – Empathy Performance Indicator (EPI)

Assesses how well the system notices itself across four dimensions:

Perceptual | Behavioural | Operational | Cultural

→ Produces a baseline **EPI score (0–100)** to track awareness and responsiveness

2 Processes – Embedding Reflection as Structure

Governance becomes adaptive through:

- **Drift Reviews** – detect early misalignment
- **Pause Authority** – safeguard reflection time
- **Learning Loops** – convert experience into design
- **Empathic Governance Forum** – cross-functional sensemaking

3 Operational Rhythms – The Cadence of Awareness

Weekly	Surface weak signals (Signal Pulse)
Monthly	Translate perception into action (Drift Review)
Quarterly	Quantify sensing capability (EPI Review)
Bi-annual	Cross-functional coherence (Governance Forum)

4 The A → B Transition Map

Guides movement from **Retrospective** → **Perspective** governance:

Awaken: Urgency reflex → Reflection habit

Embed: Compliance → Learning rituals

Institutionalise: Reactive correction → Proactive



Why This Is Hard

- ❑ **It requires acting before proof**
Strategic Empathy asks leaders to **intervene when evidence is incomplete** —and to own that decision openly.
- ❑ **It exposes power, not just performance**
Early signals often point to **authority gaps**, misaligned **incentives**, or decisions no one wants to revisit.
- ❑ **It breaks the comfort of “good reporting”**
The system may look healthier on paper while becoming **less aware in reality**.

*Strategic Empathy doesn't fail because it's too soft.
It fails because it's too honest.*



What Changes For You

What Changes for You (Operational Shift)

Signal

Default Mode:

- Progress updates
- Variance explanations
- Status confidence



Strategic Mode

- Friction
- Hesitation
- Workarounds
- Silence

You stop listening for performance. You start listening for strain.

Intervention:

- Wait for quantified risk
- Wait for defensible escalaton
- Wait for metrics to move



Strategic Mode

- Act when narratives diverge.
- Act when decisions slow.
- Act when “we’ll monitor it” appears

Intervention shifts from proof to perception.

Authority:

- Demand assurance
- Enforce plans



Legitimise uncertainty.

- Create reflection space.
- Adjust cadence, scope, ownership

Strategic Empathy doesn't give you more information.

It changes what you treat as actionable.



Q&A



Everything flows.
The question is whether your organisation
flows with intent — or with drift.

Strategic clarity in complexity
Governance that listens early
Execution that survives reality



PANTA RHEI SERVICES
STRATEGIC EMPATHY IN ACTION

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