WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

# When the Metrics Miss the Point

A measure with a purpose, a blind spot, and a way to keep it honest.

15-20 minutes | Goodhart's law

## Use it in three moves

1. Name the outcome you care about, then the number being used to represent it.

2. Imagine someone improving the number while making the real outcome worse. Look for actual evidence before deciding that is happening.

3. Keep useful measurement, add a balancing signal and a conversation, and decide when the target itself needs review.

### The outcome people actually need

### The number being watched

### What counts as success on the dashboard?

### How could the number improve while the outcome worsens?

A possibility to investigate, not an accusation.

# When the Metrics Miss the Point

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

### What have you actually seen?

Keep evidence separate from suspicion.

### A balancing signal

Choose one that could reveal the cost hidden by the main measure.

### Whose experience will you hear?

Include people affected by the target.

### When should the target itself be reconsidered?

## A question for me

What matters here that this number cannot tell us?

# See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

### The outcome people actually need

Customers can complete their work after asking for help.

### The number being watched

Tickets closed per week

### What counts as success on the dashboard?

More closures than last week

### How could the number improve while the outcome worsens?

Close tickets before checking whether the answer worked.

### What have you actually seen?

Five customers reopened the same issue this week.

### A balancing signal

Look at repeat contacts alongside a sample of resolved cases.

### Whose experience will you hear?

Ask customers and support colleagues what remains difficult.

### When should the target itself be reconsidered?

If repeat contacts rise while closures improve, review the target with the team.

## The thinking behind it

Nic asks what matters that will never fit on the dashboard. A number can tell you where to look; the people living with it can tell you what you have missed.

Goodhart's law began with economist Charles Goodhart's 1975 observation about monetary-policy relationships changing when used for control. The wider lesson is that a target can change behavior in ways that weaken what the measure tells us.

Evidence to the UK Parliament discussing Goodhart's law

Read The Search For Unapologetic Impracticality In Leadership: Part III - How We Trained Ourselves to Mistake Certainty for Wisdom by Nic Payne