



ROCKETAPEX

Customer-Signal Trace

A 15-minute check for the handoff that weakens a real customer request

Modernization priorities often begin as lists: upgrade a framework, replace a service, rebuild an integration, automate a workflow. Those may be legitimate needs. Before ordering the list, trace one real customer signal through the delivery system. The most useful first constraint may sit where context, time, or trust is lost.

Set a 15-minute timer. The goal is to identify one handoff worth investigating - not to complete an audit or prove a root cause.

1 CHOOSE ONE REAL REQUEST

Pick a customer request or piece of feedback from the past month that required a product or engineering decision. Follow what actually happened, not the process that was supposed to happen.

The original customer signal

The decision or customer-visible result

2 TRACE THE ACTUAL PATH

Sketch the request's path. Use only the stages that applied. At each handoff, note the person, team, or system that held the request.

Signal received

Captured

Interpreted

Decision made

Work delivered

Result checked

3 MARK THE FRICTION

Add a mark wherever the request:

WAITED

Progress stopped for an owner, input, approval, decision, or available capacity.

RELIED ON GUESSWORK

Someone moved forward without enough context, evidence, or a clear decision.

REQUIRED RECONCILIATION

People or systems compared conflicting information to establish what had happened.

These are clues. One trace does not establish a general pattern.

4 FIND THE FIRST WEAK HANDOFF

Where does a customer signal become weaker, slower, or harder to trust?

Circle the first handoff where important context was lost, an avoidable delay appeared, or confidence in the information dropped.

The handoff to inspect

5 NAME THE MAIN SOURCE OF DRAG

Choose the best description for this trace. These labels describe the constraint; they are not a score or an assignment of blame.

☐ Product decision: The meaning, priority, owner, or decision rule was unclear.

☐ Engineering system: Architecture, dependencies, tests, deployment, or another technical constraint made action difficult.

☐ Operating handoff: Ownership, approval, coordination, or working cadence created friction.

☐ Data quality: The necessary evidence was unavailable, inconsistent, late, or difficult to trust.

6 CHOOSE THE SMALLEST USEFUL FIX

What is the smallest change we can test the next time this path runs?

It might be a clearer owner, one preserved source field, a decision rule, a removed approval, a defined source of truth, or a check at a risky handoff. Do not default to new automation before the constraint is clear.

Change to test

Owner and next opportunity to test it

What should be observably different

For teams unsure where modernization should begin, this trace may provide a more useful starting point than a long technical wishlist. It does not replace technical assessment. It gives that assessment a concrete operating constraint.

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