A5
TOOL

THE INNOVATION CODEX · TOOLKIT

Failure Premortem Worksheet

Purpose. Surface and mitigate the most likely causes of failure before they happen.

What it captures. Starting from an imagined failure, the worksheet ranks plausible causes by likelihood and impact, names the early warning signals, and assigns each mitigation an owner.

When to use it. Before committing to a plan or launch, while changes are still cheap.

Common mistake. Listing risks without early warning signals or owners, which turns the premortem into a worry list. Project Swift paired each of its top three risks with an early warning signal, a mitigation, and a named owner before the pilot began.

Decision rule. Commit to the plan only when each top-ranked risk has a mitigation, an early warning signal, and a named owner. A high-likelihood, high-impact risk without an owner is a reason to delay the commitment, not a note for later.

Project or Initiative

Primary Objective

Premortem prompt: It is six months from now, and this project has failed. What went wrong?

Failure Categories and Modes *three to five specific ways the initiative could fail in each category*

Technical/Feasibility

Market/Desirability

Execution/Team

Business/Viability

Top Three Risks, Ranked by Likelihood and Impact *highest first; rate likelihood and impact high, medium, or low*

Risk and cause	Likelihood / impact	Early warning signal	Mitigation	Owner

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