

Fitness Sequence

How to test whether change can survive your system

By Mario Aiello – Adaptive ways

Most change efforts start with a solution and work backward to justify it. The Fitness Sequence starts with the system and asks what it can actually absorb.

It's four questions, asked in order, each one a gate the next one depends on.

Fit for Purpose — is this change aligned with the outcome the organisation actually needs, or with the outcome someone assumed it needed?

Fit for Context — does it work in this environment, with these constraints, this history, this culture — not the environment it was designed for?

Fit for Execution — can the organisation actually do this, with the capability, capacity, and authority it currently has?

Fit for Improvement — can it evolve as the organisation learns, or does it lock in on day one and start decaying from there?

Skip a gate and the sequence doesn't fail loudly. It fails quietly, three months later, when the thing that looked fit for purpose turns out to have been unfit for execution the whole time.

The Four Questions for Fitness

Where the Fitness Sequence tells you what to check, the Four Questions for Fitness tell you how to check it. For any proposed change, ask: fit for what, by whom, how, and until when. Vague answers here are the earliest warning sign the sequence is about to be skipped rather than worked through.

The sequence doesn't run once. It's revisited every time the Friction-Fitness Map shows tension building, which is most of the time, in most organisations.

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