Step 1: Identify Service Errors & Risk Points

KEY LEARNINGS: STEP 1: IDENTIFY SERVICE ERRORS & RISK POINTS

Overview
- Prevention and detection are powerful tools—but they're useless if you don't know where the mistakes are happening.
- Many service errors are hidden or silent, embedded in daily processes.
- The first step in any mistake-proofing strategy is identifying service failures and weak spots before they escalate.

How to Identify Service Errors & Risk Points

1. Analyze Complaints and Failures
- Purpose: Use customer feedback and incident logs as warning signs.
- Examples:
    - Refund requests, support tickets, and cancellations all point to deeper issues.
    - A travel agency found that frequent cancellations were due to an unclear refund policy, not indecisive customers.
- Insight: Complaints are clues, not just frustrations—dig deeper to find root causes.

2. Walk Through the Process Yourself
- Purpose: Experience the service like a customer to spot hidden friction points.
- Examples:
    - A law firm simulated a client trying to book an appointment.
    - Result: Discovered confusing menus, unclear confirmations, and missing contact support.
- Insight: You can't fix what you don't feel—become the user to understand the pain points.

3. Observe Frontline Operations
- Purpose: Watch employees work to spot inefficiencies or bottlenecks in real-time.
- Examples:
    - A film crew experienced delays despite following protocols.
    - Observation revealed the crew wasn't receiving updated schedules—a mobile app solved the issue.
- Insight: If errors persist despite good execution, the system—not the people—is flawed.

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4. Stress-Test the System
- Purpose: Simulate pressure situations to expose system weaknesses.
- Examples:
  - A city's dispatch center tested operations during peak traffic hours.
  - Found delays caused by too many manual data entries; automation improved performance.
- Insight: Only by pushing the system to its limits do hidden risks become visible.

Key Takeaway
- Error identification is the starting point for any effective mistake-proofing strategy.
- It uncovers where errors actually happen, not just where they're visible.
- Once you know where the cracks are forming, you can prevent breakdowns before they occur.