

# Workaround Pathology: How a 'Special' Part Name Becomes a 10-Year Data Headache

## TL;DR

Ever seen a part named "Alternator (Special)" or "Tyre 385/65R22.5 GAUTENG" in your CMMS? Congratulations, you've met workaround pathology. It's the art of hacking master data to fit a system that can't flex. It solves today's crisis. And guarantees tomorrow's chaos. This article explores how these workarounds sneak in, why they linger, and how to quarantine them before they infect your fleet data for a decade.

## The Scene of the Crime

A new requirement pops up: a regional variant, a contract exception, a once-off job. The system can't accommodate it properly—not without a developer, a budget, and three months of change control. So, someone does what any smart, practical ops person would do: adds a "special" label.

- Brake Pad (OEM)
- Brake Pad (Alternative)
- Brake Pad (Customer X)

Job done. Problem solved. Now we can run that job, issue that part, generate that quote. But what we also did—without knowing it—was sow a seed of long-term data rot.

## The Fallout: A Decade Later

Fast forward a few years. The urgent need is gone, the special rule forgotten, but the workaround lives on:

- It's on 500 job cards.
- It appears in stock reports.
- It's skewing your cost-per-component charts.
- And no one is quite sure if it's still valid.

Worse, the person who created it has left.

Now you've got multiple parts with near-identical names, and you can't merge or report cleanly. Your system is whispering lies, and your team no longer trusts it. Congratulations. You've built a workaround so robust it outlived its creator.

# Why Do These Workarounds Spread?

Because they work—*in the moment*.

Because change control is hard.

Because master data is everyone's job—which often means it's no one's job.

Because your system has no "retirement" function for data entries.

And because deep down, we're all just trying to get today's job done.

## Workaround Pathology Symptoms

- Part names with parentheses: (Special), (Temp), (Test)
- Job cards referencing obsolete variants
- Duplicate asset names with regional tags
- CMMS dropdowns longer than your last board pack

## Treatment Plan: Five Steps to Contain the Spread

1. **Log the Hack**  
If you must create a workaround, record *why* it exists. Use a shared "Workaround Registry" or a comment field.
2. **Set a Review Date**  
Every workaround must have an expiry or audit date. If it still makes sense 6 months later, formalize it properly.
3. **Use Metadata, Not Labels**  
Don't embed logic in a name. If you need a regional rule, add a custom field or tag—don't rename the part.
4. **Governance is Not Optional**  
Appoint a data steward. One human being with the power to say: "No more 'special' brake pads."
5. **Retire Old Entries**  
Just like trucks, data has a life. Create a process to deprecate and archive outdated entries.

## What Good Looks Like

- BP-00123 = Brake Pad, Front, OEM
- Region applied via depot code
- Service type logged as metadata
- No duplicates, no suffixes, no surprises

Every report is clean. Every part is traceable. Every technician knows exactly what to order.

## Final Thought: Clever Today, Chaos Tomorrow

Workarounds feel clever. They dodge bureaucracy. They solve the problem. They make you the hero—today.

But unless you track, review, and eventually retire them, they become legacy problems. You didn't fix the system. You *forked* it. Quietly. Permanently.

The real lesson? If your system can't flex, fix the system. Not the data.

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### **We've all seen it.**

Can't create a regional variant in your CMMS? Just rename the part: "Tyre 385/65R22.5 (GAUTENG)". Problem solved—until five years later when the variant is gone, the suffix is still there, and your reports are lying to you.

In this article, I unpack *workaround pathology*—the innocent-looking hacks that quietly turn your master data into a mess. It's part satire, part serious warning, and 100% drawn from real fleet-life experience.

Read it if you've ever thought: "We'll just fix it in the name field."

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