

[DRAFT] Human Cooperation System (HCS)

A diagnostic lens for understanding how human cooperation enables effective work.

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION & QUICK START | 4 |
| 1.1 Human Cooperation System (HCS) – From Context to Practice | 4 |
| 1.1.1 Introduction | 4 |
| 1.1.2 Who It's For | 4 |
| 1.1.3 Purpose | 4 |
| 1.1.4 Read This First | 4 |
| 1.1.5 Positioning | 5 |
| 2. THEORY | 6 |
| 2.1 The Human Cooperation System Matrix | 6 |
| 2.1.1 Why the Matrix Exists | 6 |
| 2.1.2 Dimensions of the Matrix | 6 |
| 2.1.3 The Human Cooperation System Matrix – Descriptions | 7 |
| 2.1.4 Matrix Cell Descriptions (5x5 = 25) | 7 |
| 2.1.5 The Human Cooperation System Matrix – Table View | 8 |
| 2.2 The Human Cooperation System Pyramid | 9 |
| 2.2.1 Why the Pyramid Exists | 9 |
| 2.2.2 How to Use the Pyramid | 9 |
| 2.2.3 Level 1 – Preconditions for Cooperation (Foundation) | 9 |
| 2.2.4 Level 2 – Core Human Needs for Cooperative Work | 9 |
| 2.2.5 Level 3 – Cooperative System Functions | 10 |
| 2.2.6 Level 4 – Practices & Frameworks | 10 |
| 2.2.7 Level 5 – Meta-Practices & Innovation (Apex) | 10 |
| 2.2.8 Pyramid View – Start & Top | 11 |
| 2.2.9 Diagnostic Use | 13 |
| 2.3 The Level Rule | 14 |
| 2.3.1 Why the Level Rule Exists | 14 |
| 2.3.2 How to Apply the Level Rule | 14 |
| 2.3.3 The Five Levels at a Glance | 14 |
| 2.3.4 Diagnostic Heuristics | 15 |
| 2.3.5 Common Anti-Patterns | 15 |
| 2.3.6 Practical Example | 15 |
| 2.3.7 Summary | 15 |
| 2.4 Diagnostic Workflow (Observation → Matrix → Level → Function → Practice) | 16 |
| 2.4.1 Why the Diagnostic Workflow Exists | 16 |
| 2.4.2 How the Workflow Works | 16 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| 2.4.3 Output Template | 17 |
| 2.4.4 Practical Example (Full Loop) | 18 |
| 2.4.5 Why It Matters | 18 |
| 3. REFERENCE | 19 |
| 3.1 About the Author | 19 |

1. INTRODUCTION & QUICK START

1.1 Human Cooperation System (HCS) – From Context to Practice

A diagnostic lens for understanding how human cooperation enables effective work.

DRAFT VERSION

This document is a **working draft** of the *Human Cooperation System (HCS)*.

Content, terminology, and structure are **subject to revision**.

1.1.1 Introduction

The **Human Cooperation System (HCS)** explores how people manage to work together – not as isolated individuals, but as interdependent actors connected by shared goals, constraints, and meaning.

It focuses on the *invisible architecture* that makes cooperation possible: the conditions, needs, and functions that hold any collaborative system together.

When collaboration fails, it is rarely due to lack of skill or effort – it usually breaks at the **system level**: misaligned expectations, unmet human needs, or missing functions that maintain trust and coherence.

HCS helps reveal these root causes before they manifest as friction, disengagement, or project failure.

1.1.2 Who It's For

HCS is designed for people who lead, enable, or study cooperation:

- **Project and Product Leads** seeking to understand why delivery struggles despite competent teams.
- **Engineering and Design Managers** working to improve cross-functional collaboration and autonomy.
- **Consultants and Coaches** diagnosing organizational misalignment or low trust between groups.
- **Researchers and Framework Builders** exploring universal patterns behind effective human cooperation.

If you've arrived here from **3SF (3-in-3 SDLC Framework)** or similar models, HCS represents the *layer beneath practice* – the foundational system that governs why engagement, delivery, and value either flow or fail.

1.1.3 Purpose

HCS serves as a **diagnostic system** for understanding and improving cooperation across all forms of human work – from teams and organizations to partnerships and ecosystems. It does not prescribe methods; instead, it offers a *lens* to evaluate which functions must be present and coherent for cooperation to succeed.

- It describes the **preconditions** that enable cooperation.
- It identifies **human needs** that sustain motivation and trust.
- It defines **stable functions** that turn shared intent into collective outcomes.

Together, these dimensions form the **Systemic Basis of Work** – what must exist before practices, tools, or frameworks can be effective.

1.1.4 Read This First

1. Start with the **Matrix** to see the five-by-five landscape of *conditions × needs*.
2. Use the **Pyramid** to understand levels from *preconditions → practices*.
3. Apply **The Level Rule** before prescribing practices.
4. Run the **Diagnostic Workflow** on real observations.

1.1.5 Positioning

Think of **HCS** as the *operating system* beneath all frameworks and practices.

Tools like Agile, Lean, or management methodologies can only succeed when the system-level conditions of cooperation are stable.

By understanding and diagnosing those foundations, leaders and teams can work with greater clarity, trust, and purpose.

2. THEORY

2.1 The Human Cooperation System Matrix

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Cooperation exists because of interdependence — when one person alone can't or doesn't want to do everything, *work becomes a shared system of value exchange*.

If one person could do everything alone, work would be **pure autonomy**.

But the moment **two or more people are involved**, *working together becomes a system* — and coordination, communication, trust, and shared purpose are no longer optional; they are essential.

2.1.1 Why the Matrix Exists

The **HCS Matrix** captures the *minimum viable structure of cooperation*.

It defines the smallest set of interacting forces required for human collaboration to emerge and remain sustainable.

It is not a framework or process map — it's a **diagnostic lens**.

It helps you identify *which essential conditions and needs are present, missing, or misaligned* in any collaborative system — from teams and partnerships to entire organizations.

When mapped across real situations, the Matrix shows *why cooperation either flourishes or fractures*, long before outcomes or metrics reveal the symptoms.

2.1.2 Dimensions of the Matrix

Naming note: The term **Change/Uncertainty tolerance** is used consistently across HCS to emphasize both the presence of change and the system's capacity to act under it.

- **Horizontal axis — Core Human Needs** for Cooperative Work

Represents what individuals and groups require to function together effectively.

- **Vertical axis — Core Work Conditions**

Represents the external and structural contexts that must exist for cooperation to take place.

Each **cell** in the matrix expresses a **minimal system function** that must be present for collaboration to emerge.

Examples illustrate how these dimensions intersect:

- *Common Purpose × Shared Understanding → Alignment on why* — shared intent behind joint work.
- *Interdependence × Feedback Loops → Outcome reflection* — awareness of mutual impact and adaptation.
- *Change/Uncertainty × Autonomy & Agency → Adaptability* — the capacity to act locally under changing conditions.

The Matrix defines the **existential layer** of the Human Cooperation System — the foundation that makes collaboration possible, preceding any specific framework, tool, or methodology.

Above this layer, operational frameworks such as Agile, DevOps, or OKRs can be seen as implementations of the underlying functions identified here.

The **Principle–Practice Matrix** later extends this logic to the operational layer, describing how cooperation is maintained and optimized once these foundational functions are active.

2.1.3 The Human Cooperation System Matrix – Descriptions

This section defines and explains each element of the Matrix that outlines the foundational **conditions** and **needs** of cooperative work.

Core Work Conditions (Vertical Axis)

1. **Common Purpose** – Shared meaning or goal that unites people working together. It gives direction and motivation, enabling alignment of actions across individuals or groups.
2. **Interdependence** – A condition where the outcome of one's work depends on others and vice versa. It requires awareness of mutual impact and encourages collaboration.
3. **Communication** – The exchange of information, meaning, and intent between individuals or groups. It enables coordination, understanding, and feedback.
4. **Trust** – A belief in the reliability, competence, and good intent of others. Trust reduces the cost of coordination and enables delegation, openness, and cooperation.
5. **Change/Uncertainty** – The inevitable presence of external or internal shifts that affect work. Handling change requires resilience, learning, and flexibility in both individuals and systems.

Core Human Needs for Cooperative Work (Horizontal Axis)

1. **Shared Understanding** – A mutual grasp of language, goals, constraints, and contexts among collaborators. It ensures that all parties interpret information similarly.
2. **Mutual Commitment** – A shared willingness to contribute to common goals. It implies dedication, accountability, and follow-through from all parties involved.
3. **Feedback Loops** – Mechanisms to observe results, evaluate progress, and make corrections. Enables learning and continuous improvement in a shared system.
4. **Distribution of Roles** – Clear delineation of who does what, ensuring responsibilities are known and efforts are coordinated.
5. **Autonomy & Agency** – The ability and permission to act with intention. Agency empowers individuals to make decisions, contribute meaningfully, and take ownership.

2.1.4 Matrix Cell Descriptions (5x5 = 25)

1. **Common Purpose × Shared Understanding = Alignment on why** – People must align on why they're working together and what success looks like. Without this, efforts may diverge.
2. **Common Purpose × Mutual Commitment = Willingness to act** – A goal alone is not enough; people must genuinely commit to working toward it together.
3. **Common Purpose × Feedback Loops = Learning intent** – Continuous evaluation of whether actions still serve the agreed purpose. Prevents mission drift.
4. **Common Purpose × Distribution of Roles = Contribution clarity** – Each role must support the purpose, ensuring no effort is wasted or misaligned.
5. **Common Purpose × Autonomy & Agency = Room for initiative** – Individuals must be able to pursue the shared purpose with self-direction and initiative.
6. **Interdependence × Shared Understanding = Task relationships** – Team members need clarity about how their tasks relate and depend on one another.
7. **Interdependence × Mutual Commitment = Responsibility** – Each person must commit to their role knowing others rely on them.
8. **Interdependence × Feedback Loops = Outcome reflection** – Real-time signals help adjust coordination and prevent cascading failures.
9. **Interdependence × Distribution of Roles = Coordination** – Role clarity enables smooth handoffs and cooperation.
10. **Interdependence × Autonomy & Agency = Local decision-making** – Teams must balance dependencies with local autonomy to avoid bottlenecks.
11. **Communication × Shared Understanding = Language/Terms** – Shared vocabulary and mental models are essential for messages to land as intended.
12. **Communication × Mutual Commitment = Social contract** – Open, honest communication supports commitment and builds accountability.
13. **Communication × Feedback Loops = Signal/response** – Effective communication delivers feedback in a usable form and closes the loop.

14. **Communication × Distribution of Roles = Clarity in interaction** – Communication supports clarity on who does what and when.
15. **Communication × Autonomy & Agency = Permission to act** – People need communication channels to raise concerns, ask for support, or declare decisions.
16. **Trust × Shared Understanding = Meaning consistency** – Trust grows when people interpret intentions and actions reliably.
17. **Trust × Mutual Commitment = Reliability** – Trust enables people to believe that others will deliver on their promises.
18. **Trust × Feedback Loops = Safety in feedback** – Safe environments allow for honest feedback without fear of blame.
19. **Trust × Distribution of Roles = Delegation** – Clear roles reduce friction and show respect for expertise, reinforcing trust.
20. **Trust × Autonomy & Agency = Empowerment** – Trust enables freedom to act without micromanagement.
21. **Change × Shared Understanding = Scenario awareness** – Adapting to change requires everyone to see and interpret the new reality similarly.
22. **Change × Mutual Commitment = Resilience** – Teams that weather change together must renew their commitment in the face of shifting conditions.
23. **Change × Feedback Loops = Learning from change** – Change demands fast, reliable feedback to inform next actions.
24. **Change × Distribution of Roles = Flexibility** – Roles may need to shift dynamically; clarity and adaptability are key.
25. **Change × Autonomy & Agency = Adaptability** – People must be empowered to respond quickly and appropriately to emerging challenges.

2.1.5 The Human Cooperation System Matrix – Table View

| Work Needs / Work Conditions | Shared Understanding | Mutual Commitment | Feedback Loops | Distribution of Roles | Autonomy & Agency |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Common Purpose | Alignment on why | Willingness to act | Learning intent | Contribution clarity | Room for initiative |
| Interdependence | Task relationships | Responsibility | Outcome reflection | Coordination | Local decision-making |
| Communication | Language / Terms | Social contract | Signal/response | Clarity in interaction | Permission to act |
| Trust | Meaning consistency | Reliability | Safety in feedback | Delegation | Empowerment |
| Change/ Uncertainty tolerance | Scenario awareness | Resilience | Learning from change | Flexibility | Adaptability |

2.2 The Human Cooperation System Pyramid

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2.2.1 Why the Pyramid Exists

The **HCS Pyramid** visualizes how cooperation evolves through **five systemic levels** – from the most fundamental conditions of existence to reflective innovation at the top.

It helps identify *where cooperation breaks down* and *which level to address first* when diagnosing teams, organizations, or partnerships.

The Pyramid complements the [HCS Matrix](#):

- The **Matrix** defines *what must coexist* (conditions × needs).
- The **Pyramid** shows *how these elements build on one another* – a hierarchy of dependency where higher levels depend on the stability of lower ones.

In short:

The Matrix describes **the anatomy of cooperation**,
while the Pyramid shows **its order of development**.

2.2.2 How to Use the Pyramid

Use the Pyramid as a **diagnostic guide**:

1. Identify which level the issue originates from – conditions, needs, functions, practices, or reflection.
2. Avoid “patching” higher levels (e.g., practices or frameworks) when foundational levels are weak.
3. Move upward only when stability and coherence are achieved below.

Each level in the Pyramid corresponds to a layer of the Human Cooperation System – from the first moment people start working together to when they consciously evolve how they work.

2.2.3 Level 1 – Preconditions for Cooperation (Foundation)

Without these, there's no “working together” at all.

They're the *existential conditions* of cooperation – the soil from which all other levels grow.

Examples:

- **Existence of a Common Purpose** – shared “why” to engage at all.
- **Interdependence** – mutual reliance or need for others' contributions.
- **Basic Communication ability** – shared medium: language, symbols, signals.
- **Basic Trust** – belief that others will not harm and will reciprocate.
- **Capacity to Act under Change** – some tolerance for uncertainty.

Maslow analogy: Physiological & safety needs – the “oxygen” of cooperation.

2.2.4 Level 2 – Core Human Needs for Cooperative Work

These are the *human-level enablers* that make foundational conditions workable day-to-day.

This corresponds to the **horizontal axis** in the [Matrix](#).

Examples:

- **Shared Understanding** – common mental model of goals, constraints, and context.
- **Mutual Commitment** – agreement to invest effort in the shared purpose.
- **Feedback Loops** – ability to observe, learn, and adjust.
- **Distribution of Roles** – clarity on who does what.
- **Autonomy & Agency** – freedom and authority to act.

Maslow analogy: Belonging and esteem needs – creating security in relationships and a sense of contribution.

2.2.5 Level 3 – Cooperative System Functions

Stable **functions** that translate human needs into **coordinated, repeatable work**.

These live in the 25 [Matrix](#) cells and define what must happen for collaboration to succeed.

Examples:

- **Problem Discovery** (Clarity of Problem Space × Shared Understanding)
- **Planning & Prioritization** (Interdependence × Distribution of Roles)
- **Monitoring & Feedback** (Communication × Feedback Loops)
- **Enablement & Empowerment** (Trust × Autonomy & Agency)
- **Adaptation & Learning** (Change × Feedback Loops)

These are the “work muscles” – when one is weak, the whole system compensates or breaks. *Maslow analogy:* Cognitive needs – organizing and directing effort.

2.2.6 Level 4 – Practices & Frameworks

Concrete, evolving ways of performing the functions.

Different implementations can fulfill the same function, depending on the organization’s context.

Examples:

- **Retrospectives** fulfill *Monitoring & Feedback*.
- **RACI matrix** fulfills *Distribution of Roles*.
- **Scrum sprint planning** fulfills *Planning & Prioritization*.
- **JTBD interviews** fulfill *Problem Discovery*.
- **Kanban** fulfills *Flow & Focus + Monitoring & Feedback*.

This is where change happens fastest – tools and trends evolve, but underlying functions stay stable.

Maslow analogy: Self-actualization tools – many possible routes to fulfill the same higher need.

2.2.7 Level 5 – Meta-Practices & Innovation (Apex)

The ability to **reflect on and redesign the system itself**.

Here, teams stop merely applying practices and begin **adapting or inventing** them to fit their unique context.

Includes:

- Combining practices into custom playbooks.
- Inventing new practices when existing ones don’t fit.
- Matching practices consciously to functions (avoiding “cargo cult” behavior).
- Teaching and sharing system-level understanding.

Maslow analogy: Self-transcendence – going beyond individual optimization to improve the system for others.

2.2.8 Pyramid View – Start & Top

Always climb levels in order

Don't patch Level 4 **practices** when Level 1–2 **preconditions or human needs** are weak.

Fix lower levels first – then revisit practices.

- **It starts** at Level 1 the moment two or more people have a reason to interact for mutual value.
- **It tops** at Level 5 when teams become self-evolving systems – capable of diagnosing, designing, and improving their own way of working without external imposition.

| Level | Name | Examples | Description |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 5 (Apex) | Meta-Practices & Innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing custom playbooks • Inventing new practices • Matching practices to functions deliberately • Coaching others in system thinking | Teams consciously reflect on, adapt, and redesign their way of working. Practices are tailored, combined, or invented to better serve needs. Knowledge is shared to elevate the whole system. |
| 4 | Practices & Frameworks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrospectives (<i>Monitoring & Feedback</i>) • RACI matrix (<i>Distribution of Roles</i>) • Scrum sprint planning (<i>Planning & Prioritization</i>) • JTBD interviews (<i>Problem Discovery</i>) • Kanban (<i>Flow & Focus + Monitoring & Feedback</i>) | Specific, evolving methods that fulfill stable functions. Practices change over time, but the function they serve remains stable. |
| 3 | Cooperative System Functions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Discovery (<i>Clarity of Problem Space × Shared Understanding</i>) • Planning & Prioritization (<i>Interdependence × Distribution of Roles</i>) • Monitoring & Feedback (<i>Communication × Feedback Loops</i>) • Enablement & Empowerment (<i>Trust × Autonomy & Agency</i>) • Adaptation & Learning (<i>Change × Feedback Loops</i>) | The stable “muscles” of cooperation – what must happen for work to succeed. Represented by the 25 cells in the Human Cooperation System Matrix . |
| 2 | Core Human Needs for Cooperative Work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Understanding • Mutual Commitment • Feedback Loops • Distribution of Roles • Autonomy & Agency | The human-level enablers that make foundational conditions operational. Corresponds to the Matrix's horizontal axis . |
| 1 (Foundation) | Preconditions for Cooperation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Purpose • Interdependence • Communication • Trust • Change/Uncertainty tolerance | The existential conditions for cooperation to exist at all. Corresponds to the Matrix's vertical axis . Without these, there is no “working together.” |

2.2.9 Diagnostic Use

When diagnosing cooperation:

- Weakness in **Level 1 or 2** indicates instability in the foundations – people lack shared context or trust.
- Weakness in **Level 3** suggests missing or broken system functions.
- Weakness in **Level 4** means inappropriate or outdated practices are being applied.
- Weakness in **Level 5** shows that the system can't yet learn or evolve on its own.

The Pyramid helps shift conversations from "*What framework should we use?*" to "*Which layer of cooperation needs attention first?*"

2.3 The Level Rule

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2.3.1 Why the Level Rule Exists

The **Level Rule** is the single most practical principle of the Human Cooperation System.

It prevents teams and leaders from treating symptoms at the *wrong level* – such as changing practices when the underlying conditions or needs are unstable.

In cooperation systems, **every level depends on the stability of the one below it**.

Just as a house can't rest on a weak foundation, teams can't sustain new practices if trust, clarity, or purpose are missing.

The Level Rule helps you locate *where to intervene first* when diagnosing or improving collaboration.

The deeper the dysfunction, the lower the level you must repair.

2.3.2 How to Apply the Level Rule

When you observe friction, confusion, or performance drops, follow this diagnostic sequence before deciding what to change:

1. Start from the bottom.

Check that foundational *conditions for cooperation* (Level 1) are present – shared purpose, trust, interdependence, and communication.

2. Assess human needs.

Verify that *day-to-day enablers* (Level 2) are satisfied – shared understanding, mutual commitment, feedback loops, role clarity, and agency.

3. Evaluate system functions.

Review whether *core cooperation functions* (Level 3) are active – such as planning, feedback, enablement, and adaptation.

4. Then adjust practices.

Only once the system is stable below Level 3 should you change *practices or frameworks* (Level 4).

5. Reflect and evolve.

At maturity (Level 5), teams begin to *self-diagnose and adapt* – applying the Level Rule themselves.

2.3.3 The Five Levels at a Glance

1. Level 1 – Preconditions for Cooperation

Common Purpose, Interdependence, Communication, Trust, Change/Uncertainty tolerance Must exist for cooperation to even begin. Without these, no system of collaboration can sustain.

2. Level 2 – Core Human Needs

Shared Understanding, Mutual Commitment, Feedback Loops, Distribution of Roles, Autonomy & Agency

These needs must be met for day-to-day work to flow without friction.

3. Level 3 – Cooperative Functions

The 25 *functions from the Matrix* must be minimally expressed so the system can coordinate, learn, and adapt.

4. Level 4 – Practices & Frameworks

Only after stabilizing Levels 1–3 can practices be tuned, replaced, or scaled without “fighting gravity.”

5. Level 5 – Meta-Practices & Innovation

Once the system is stable and self-aware, it can safely evolve its own way of working.

2.3.4 Diagnostic Heuristics

Use these quick rules when assessing where to act:

- If a problem **repeats across multiple practices**, it's likely **not** a Level 4 issue – check Levels 1–3.
- If alignment **collapses under stress**, the root cause is almost always at **Level 1 or 2**.
- If coordination **stalls despite good relationships**, inspect **Level 3** – one or more core functions are missing or unclear.
- If **people lose trust in frameworks**, it may signal a mismatch between the *function needed* and the *practice chosen* (Level 4 problem built on weak lower layers).

2.3.5 Common Anti-Patterns

- **Cargo culting** – copying visible practices (Level 4) to compensate for missing foundations (Level 1–2).
- **Premature scaling** – optimizing or standardizing before core functions are stable.
- **Overdiagnosis** – jumping to structural fixes instead of addressing unmet human needs.
- **Tool worship** – assuming the adoption of a tool solves cooperation gaps.

2.3.6 Practical Example

When a team repeatedly fails to deliver despite switching from Scrum to Kanban:

- Level 4 (Practices) changes are visible but ineffective.
- Diagnosis shows missing **Feedback Loops** and unclear **Distribution of Roles** → both are *Level 2 needs*.
- Root cause lies lower – no amount of framework tuning will fix it until **shared understanding and feedback culture** are restored.

The Level Rule turns “what framework should we use?” into “what layer of cooperation is failing right now?”

2.3.7 Summary

The **Level Rule** ensures interventions follow the natural order of cooperation:

| If you want to fix... | First verify... | Otherwise you risk... |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Practices or tools | Preconditions and needs | Surface fixes without stability |
| Collaboration quality | Trust, commitment, and understanding | Repeating breakdowns |
| Delivery flow | Functional coordination | Hidden friction and rework |
| Team autonomy | Clear roles and feedback | Chaos disguised as freedom |

Essence of the Rule

Never try to optimize the system at a higher level than it can currently sustain.

Mastering this principle makes every improvement effort more efficient, humane, and lasting.

2.4 Diagnostic Workflow (Observation → Matrix → Level → Function → Practice)

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2.4.1 Why the Diagnostic Workflow Exists

The **HCS Diagnostic Workflow** turns theory into action.

It's a repeatable process for tracing **observable issues** in cooperation back to their **systemic root causes** – before deciding how to intervene.

Most improvement efforts fail because they start with *practice changes* (Level 4) rather than diagnosing *which level of cooperation is weak*.

This workflow keeps analysis grounded and ensures each corrective action strengthens the right layer of the system.

The goal is not to fix symptoms – it's to restore coherence between **conditions, needs, and functions**.

2.4.2 How the Workflow Works

Use this short, structured loop on any issue or pattern you observe.

1. Observation – Capture evidence

Write down what you see, *hear, or measure* – without interpretation or blame.

Focus on **observable behavior**, not assumptions.

Example:

"Critical dependencies were discovered late; downstream team blocked twice this sprint."

This ensures that diagnosis starts from data, not opinion.

2. Matrix Mapping – Locate where it lives

Map the observation to the **HCS Matrix**:

Which **Condition** (vertical axis) and which **Human Need** (horizontal axis) are involved?

Example:

Interdependence × Feedback Loops → Outcome Reflection

Late discovery means coordination and feedback signals are weak.

This step anchors the issue to a specific **function** – preventing vague problem statements like "communication issue" or "poor planning."

3. Level Check – Find how deep the root is

Determine the **lowest affected level** in the [HCS Pyramid](#):

| If the problem is about... | It likely belongs to... |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Missing purpose, trust, or communication basics | Level 1 – Preconditions |
| Misalignment, unclear roles, weak feedback, low agency | Level 2 – Human Needs |
| Broken coordination or learning cycles | Level 3 – Functions |
| Ineffective or misapplied methods | Level 4 – Practices |
| Lack of reflection or self-improvement | Level 5 – Meta-Practices |

Example:

Repeated late dependency discovery → weak **Level 3 Monitoring & Feedback**
Possibly thin **Level 2 Feedback Loops** underneath.

This step is where the **Level Rule** applies – fix lower levels first.

4. Function to Practice – Select what to strengthen

Once you've located the function, choose or design a **practice** that fulfills it.

Use the [25 Matrix functions](#) as your reference for what "healthy cooperation" looks like.
The practice can be a known method or a custom one suited to your context.

Example:

Function: *Communication × Feedback Loops → Signal & Response*
Practice ideas:
- Add an explicit dependency scan before each sprint. - Introduce a daily "risk surfacing" moment. - Create a visual "Andon" signal for cross-team blockers.

5. Trial & Learn – Validate and iterate

Run the chosen practice for 1–2 cycles and track a **specific observable signal** (not vague satisfaction scores).
If it doesn't produce the expected outcome, recheck **lower levels** before trying another practice.

Example:

Watch: *Reduction in repeated dependency delays within two sprints.*
If not improved → revisit Levels 2 and 3 for unaddressed issues in feedback culture.

2.4.3 Output Template

Use this lightweight template for documentation or reflection:

```
Observation:
Matrix cell:
Level(s) involved:
Function to strengthen:
Practice(s) selected:
Signal/metric to watch:
Review date:
```

You can use it in retrospectives, coaching sessions, or system diagnostics – it fits equally well in individual reflection or team learning contexts.

2.4.4 Practical Example (Full Loop)

Observation:

"Design team's updates rarely align with development progress; misinterpretations surface during QA."

Matrix Mapping:

Communication × Shared Understanding → Language / Terms

Level Check:

Level 2–3 issue: weak shared understanding and coordination function.

Function to Strengthen:

Clarify shared vocabulary and decision handoffs.

Practice(s):

- Introduce weekly alignment review with both design and dev leads.
- Create a shared "definition of ready" document.

Signal/Metric:

Reduced QA rework or clarifications needed after handoff.

2.4.5 Why It Matters

This workflow transforms **improvement discussions** from reactive fixes to **systemic diagnosis**.

It replaces "who made the mistake?" with "which part of the system is under strain?" — building psychological safety while improving results.

The HCS Diagnostic Workflow is the bridge between **theory and daily practice** — a loop that keeps cooperation systems alive, adaptive, and learnable.

Summary Table

| Step | Purpose | Output |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Observation | Capture neutral evidence | Statement of what happened |
| 2. Matrix Mapping | Locate systemic dimension | Condition × Need = Function |
| 3. Level Check | Identify root depth | Level(s) causing dysfunction |
| 4. Function → Practice | Define safe intervention | Function and matching practice |
| 5. Trial & Learn | Validate and adjust | Measurable feedback loop |

Essence

Every cooperation issue can be traced through the same lens:

Observation → Matrix → Level → Function → Practice → Learning.

This is how theory becomes a living system.

3. REFERENCE

3.1 About the Author

Viktor Jevdokimov, Vilnius, Lithuania – Creator of 3in3.dev and the 3SF Framework

Viktor Jevdokimov is a software engineering leader, systems thinker, and framework designer with over 30 years of experience in software product delivery, modernization, and team alignment.

He is the creator of the **3-in-3 SDLC Framework (3SF)** and founder of the **3in3.dev** initiative – an independent platform dedicated to advancing collaboration and alignment between **Client**, **Vendor**, and **Product** organizations.

Professional Background

- Began career supporting distributed banking software on DOS and Windows, developing a deep appreciation for troubleshooting and system design.
- Progressed through roles of **developer**, **architect**, **delivery lead**, and **practice lead**, working with international clients on modernization and cloud migration initiatives.
- Specializes in **Client–Vendor relationship design**, **project leadership**, and **delivery system diagnostics**.
- Advocates for “*Context before Method*” and “*Trust before Control*” as guiding principles of effective collaboration.

Creative and Personal Work

Beyond software, Viktor is an **active musician and live sound engineer**, performing and mixing with the *Great Things* cover band.

He approaches both sound and systems with the same mindset: striving for **clarity, balance, and authenticity**.

About 3in3.dev

3in3.dev is an independent research and publishing initiative founded by Viktor Jevdokimov.

It consolidates his experience and experimentation into open frameworks that help organizations improve how they **engage, deliver, and measure value** across client–vendor ecosystems.

3in3.dev publishes:

- The **3-in-3 SDLC Framework (3SF)**
- The **3-in-3 Maturity Model**
- Supporting tools, templates, and learning materials under an open license.

“3SF is not another method – it’s the operating system that connects them all.”
— Viktor J., Creator of 3in3.dev

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For contact, collaboration, or speaking requests, visit **<https://3in3.dev>**.