

The Leadership Opportunity Hidden in Recurring Dysfunction

Every business has friction. The leadership test is what happens after it repeats.

Hilary Hoff · Director of Client Experience

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The first time a handoff breaks, there may be a good reason. The second time, there may be useful context. By the third time, the question changes.

We are no longer just asking why it happened. We have to ask why the business is still making room for it.

Recurring dysfunction becomes useful at that point. Not because it is acceptable, but because it points to something leadership can reduce, clarify, reinforce, or redesign.

Repetition Changes the Responsibility

A difficult week is not a culture problem. A missed expectation is not always a leadership failure. A frustrated team is not automatically dysfunctional.

It's the patterns of dysfunction that require a different standard.

Reasons still matter. A team may be stretched. A manager may be overloaded. A process may be unclear. The market may be applying pressure. Context helps us lead with judgment instead of reaction.

But context should not become permission.

When a valid explanation starts ending the conversation, the business begins accepting the condition instead of improving it. Over time, people stop expecting the issue to change. They adjust around it. Standards bend quietly. Workarounds become familiar. The organization keeps moving, but it carries more friction than it needs to.

No one has to decide to normalize dysfunction. Repetition can do that on its own.

The Cost Is Operational Drag

Recurring dysfunction rarely looks expensive at first. Work is still getting done. Customers are still being served. Teams are still finding a way through the week.

The cost is in the drag.

Managers spend time containing issues that should be shrinking. Good employees learn which standards are negotiable. Coaching loses force when the environment rewards old habits. Strategy sounds clear in the meeting but weakens in the day-to-day.

For sales organizations, this matters quickly. Differentiation depends on consistent behavior under pressure. Messaging has to hold in real customer conversations. Coaching has to show up outside the one-on-one. New strategies need an environment where they can survive after the kickoff.

A strong idea cannot carry the business if the operating conditions keep pulling people back to the old pattern.

Reduce What Can Be Reduced

Leadership does not require a frictionless business. Some tension is healthy. Some disagreement improves the work. Some pressure is unavoidable.

The better standard is to reduce what can be reduced.



A recurring issue is not an accusation. It is a prompt to inspect the condition. If a handoff keeps breaking, the handoff needs attention. If expectations keep drifting, the standard needs clarity. If managers are expected to coach but do not have the support to do it well, repeating the expectation will not be enough.

The move is not to dramatize dysfunction. The move is to get precise.

One way to do that is to P.R.E.D.I.C.T. the pattern. Not as a full diagnostic exercise. Use it as a quick leadership check before the issue gets absorbed as normal.

- **Plan:** What standard should this situation be measured against?
- **Research:** What has actually happened more than once?
- **Engage:** Who is closest to the breakdown, and what are they seeing?
- **Discover:** What condition is allowing the issue to repeat?
- **Intersect:** Where are expectations, support, and accountability not meeting?
- **Communicate:** What needs to be clarified, reinforced, or reset?
- **Transition:** What changes now so the team does not keep working around the same friction?

We don't need to make every recurring issue into a major initiative. We need to make the small shift from "Why is this still happening?" to "What needs to change so this does not keep requiring extra energy from the team?"

That is leadership through the issue, not around it.

The Opportunity Inside the Pattern

Recurring dysfunction shows where the business is carrying unnecessary weight.

That becomes the opportunity: not to blame or overcorrect, but to lead earlier and clear the way.

Strong teams do not become stronger because dysfunction never shows up. We become stronger when leadership recognizes the pattern, gets precise about what is allowing it to continue, and refuses to let the avoidable become normal.

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