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THE WHY WE DO THAT SERIES | FREE READER COMPANION

The Room Reader

A Work Patterns Field Guide

A one-week field guide for comparing the same workplace pattern across rooms, rewards and pressures without turning people into types.

THE QUESTION IT STARTS FROM

What is this room asking of people, and what is it costing?

BEGIN HERE

Read the room without labelling the people

The book closes each chapter with Notice, Try and Ask. This field guide gives those three moves somewhere to travel across a working week.

- Choose a situation, not a person, as the unit of observation.
- Ask what the behaviour protects and what the room rewards.
- Run one small experiment rather than announcing a new identity.
- Managers and teams should examine conditions before correcting individuals.

A NOTE ON PACE

These patterns are reflection lenses, not employee categories or assessments. Do not use this guide to score, diagnose or rank colleagues.

FIELD INDEX

Twelve patterns to notice

These names translate the book's chapter sequence into portable workplace observations. A person may use several patterns, or none, depending on the room.

1

The held-back thought

A clear contribution stays inside the person who built it.

2

Corridor honesty

The real sentence appears only after the official room ends.

3

Visible busyness

Activity becomes evidence of value, even when it costs the work.

4

The advance apology

A request pays for its existence before anyone objects.

5

The armoured email

A simple message grows protection against every possible reading.

6

Invisible noticing

One person quietly carries what everyone else misses.

7

The automatic yes

Agreement arrives before capacity has been checked.

8

Quiet depletion

Work keeps landing while the person underneath slowly disappears from view.

9

Recognition hunger

Credit becomes the proof that effort and identity still count.

10

The hidden brief

The stated request and the human need underneath it are not the same.

11

The role after hours

The laptop closes, but the working identity stays switched on.

12

The old instruction

A present-day room activates a rule learned somewhere else.

REFLECTION PAGE

The situation page

Describe one working moment before you interpret it.

What was the room, task or exchange?

What behaviour became visible?

What happened immediately before it?

Which pattern lens might be useful, without treating it as a label?

REFLECTION PAGE

Protection, reward and cost

A behaviour can protect a person and serve a workplace while still carrying a cost.

What might this behaviour protect in the short term?

What does this workplace reward or depend on?

What does the pattern cost the person, team or work?

What condition could make a different response easier?

REFLECTION PAGE

Notice

Choose one observable cue that will help you recognise the pattern earlier.

The cue I will watch for is:

I usually notice it only after:

An earlier moment I could notice is:

The neutral language I will use to describe it is:

REFLECTION PAGE

Try

The experiment should be small enough to run inside a normal working day.

One variable I can change is:

The smallest useful experiment is:

What support, permission or preparation would help?

What result would count as useful information, even if it is imperfect?

REFLECTION PAGE

Ask

A good question opens information. It does not smuggle in a verdict.

What do I genuinely not know yet?

What question could I ask without naming someone as the problem?

Who is the right person to ask, and in which setting?

What answer would I find difficult to hear?

ONE WORKING WEEK

The working-week record

Track one pattern in more than one situation. The comparison is the useful part.

MONDAY AND TUESDAY: Situation and visible behaviour

What the room rewarded

What I tried or changed

What happened next

ONE WORKING WEEK

The working-week record

Track one pattern in more than one situation. The comparison is the useful part.

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY: Situation and visible behaviour

What the room rewarded

What I tried or changed

What happened next

ONE WORKING WEEK

The working-week record

Track one pattern in more than one situation. The comparison is the useful part.

FRIDAY AND REVIEW: Situation and visible behaviour

What the room rewarded

What I tried or changed

What happened next

REFLECTION PAGE

Individual view

Use this page when the pattern is yours to experiment with.

What am I currently carrying because I am good at carrying it?

What do I want the room to understand without guessing?

What request, boundary or contribution can I make visible?

KEEP IT SMALL

Choose one room and one move. This is not a total reinvention of how you work.

REFLECTION PAGE

Manager view

Use this page to examine the environment you shape before focusing on one employee's behaviour.

Which behaviours receive praise, access or protection here?

Who absorbs ambiguity, urgency or emotional labour?

What structural change could reduce the cost?

What question should I ask privately rather than assume publicly?

REFLECTION PAGE

Team view

Keep the conversation on situations, norms and systems. Nobody needs to be assigned a type.

Which room or process are we examining?

What does the current setup make easy?

What does it make unnecessarily difficult?

What one team experiment will we run, and when will we review it?

REFLECTION PAGE

What changed?

Return to the original situation after the week.

What repeated across different rooms?

What changed when the context changed?

What did the experiment reveal?

What is the next useful question, not the final verdict?

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Read the conditions, not only the conduct.

Workplace behaviour is shaped by the person, the pressure and the room watching. Better questions make more of that system visible, which gives people and teams somewhere practical to begin.

BUY THE BOOK

LEAVE AN HONEST REVIEW

A FINAL NOTE

This companion is for personal reflection and education. It is not therapy, diagnosis or medical advice. Keep what is useful, leave what is not, and seek qualified support when a question needs more than a page.