

FAILURE MAP

ANALYZE-F-0003

FAMILY

CODE

ANALYZE

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Expose how a system, plan or workflow can fail, where failures propagate and which tests buy the most risk reduction first.

WHAT IT IS

FAILURE MAP is a pre-mortem formula for things that have enough structure to break in more than one place. It maps components, dependencies and operating assumptions before tracing concrete failure modes and the routes by which one local problem can become a system-level problem.

Instead of producing a generic risk list, it separates triggers, failure states, effects, detectability and containment. It then turns the map into a practical test order so effort goes first to failures that are both consequential and poorly understood.

BEST FOR

Software, workflows, launches, production pipelines, services, operational plans, automations, technical architectures, handoffs and projects with interacting dependencies.

WHAT YOU GIVE IT

A description of the system or plan, its components and dependencies if known, intended outcome, operating constraints and any known incidents or weak points.

WHAT IT RETURNS

A dependency-aware failure map with failure modes, causes, local and cascading effects, warning signals, existing controls, blind spots and a prioritized validation plan.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Describe how the system actually operates, including awkward manual steps and external dependencies rather than an idealized version.
2. Add known incidents or near misses when available; they are valuable anchors but should not limit the search to failures that have already happened.
3. Use the validation plan to test uncertainty in order of consequence and observability before investing in broad defensive complexity.

GOOD FIT IF...

Choose this formula when the important question is not “what could go wrong?” but “where can it break, what happens next and what should we test first?”

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