Work–Feedback Loop

The **Work–Feedback Loop** is a thinking and diagnostic model that shows whether work in your organization **creates real effects, is measured against a guiding intent, triggers decisions, and actually changes future work**. It helps you quickly identify the structural bottleneck that limits adaptability—**without** debating methods or "agility" as a label.

Contact & Discussion

Feedback and discussions about the model are expressly welcome.

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1. What this is about

Many organizations are getting faster: more releases, more initiatives, more meetings, more "output." And yet a familiar experience remains: **reality changes, but the system doesn't change along with it fast enough.**

When that happens, it's rarely a motivation or competence issue. It's a structural issue: **work is not cleanly coupled to its real effects—and those effects don't reliably change what work happens next.**

That is exactly what the **Work–Feedback Loop** is for: a thinking and diagnostic model that makes a system's adaptability visible—regardless of which methods, roles, or process labels are currently in use.

1.1 Practical value

With this model, you can quickly clarify:

- **Where does feedback stop being "information"—and where does it start becoming "consequence"?**
  (In other words: Where does perception turn into a decision that actually changes future work?)
- **Which bottleneck limits adaptability the most right now?**
  Signal (do effects become visible?), Decision (who can reprioritize?), Execution (when does it become effective?), Capital (when can money/capacity really be reallocated?), Alignment (does feedback flow across levels?)
- **Why local optimization often looks like progress—but structurally doesn't learn.**
  (Because activity increases while coupling and responsiveness stay the same.)

The Work–Feedback Loop is therefore not an "adoption program," but a tool to identify **direction, cause, and leverage** before trying to "improve" anything.

1.2 The core principle: coupling over activity

The core is deliberately simple:

Work → Feedback → Decision → future Work

A system only learns reliably from reality if six conditions are met:

1. **Work** creates a real effect (not just internal activity),
2. the work is guided by a **guiding intent**—an expectation of what effect it should produce,
3. the effect becomes visible as **feedback** (as a signal, not an opinion),
4. the signal is compared against the **guiding intent**,
5. this leads to a **decision** (priorities/assumptions/resources change),
6. and that decision changes **future work**.

The guiding intent does not have to be a rigid goal. It can be a hypothesis, a strategic direction, or an expected outcome. What matters is that it is clear enough to make feedback evaluable—and open enough to allow for unexpected signals. Without intent, there is no benchmark against which a signal can be measured. Surprise makes information valuable, but surprise requires an expectation.

If any of these conditions is not met, the feedback loop is broken: it may feel productive—but it is not structurally adaptive.

1.3 An example

A product team ships a new feature: a simplified registration flow. The **guiding intent** is to reduce the drop-off rate during onboarding by one third.

After the release, the team monitors usage data. The drop-off rate decreases—but only by ten percent. At the same time, an unexpected signal emerges: users who complete the new flow drop off more frequently at a later step. The **feedback** is there, it is measurable, and it deviates from the expectation.

The team brings this insight into the next prioritization round. The **decision** is made: instead of building the next planned feature, the team first investigates the later drop-off point. **Future work** changes based on the feedback.

In this case, the loop is closed. Work creates an effect, the effect is compared against the guiding intent, a decision follows, and the next work changes.

Now the counter-example: the same team ships the same feature. But the usage data is only analyzed weeks later—or it never reaches the people who decide on priorities. Or the data arrives, but the next three sprints are already planned and non-negotiable. In each of these cases, the feedback loop is broken. The team keeps working, but not based on what it learned.

This pattern—closed or broken feedback loops—is the core of the model. In the following chapters, we examine where and why this coupling is typically disrupted.

1.4 What this document provides

So that the diagnosis doesn't stop at an abstract circle, this document extends the base model along the typical bottlenecks found in organizations:

- **Chapter 2 – Base model:**
  Precise terms (Work, guiding intent, Feedback, Decision, future Work) and the condition for when a feedback loop is truly closed.
- **Chapter 3 – Two speeds & system states:**
  The distinction between *work speed* and *feedback speed* and four typical states. This makes it visible whether a system works fast or learns fast—and where the bottleneck sits.
- **Chapter 4 – Time as a structural variable:**
  Breaking response time down into signal time, decision time, and execution time. This enables concrete conversations about delay instead of vague "too slow."
- **Chapter 5 – Decision latency:**
  Why many systems don't fail at "delivery," but at binding prioritization and decision-making—and how this latency behaves as structural risk.
- **Chapter 6 – Capital coupling:**
  Adaptation ends where capital/capacity cannot be reallocated. This chapter shows how budget and investment cycles act as a frequency limit—even when teams are operationally fast.
- **Chapter 7 – Nested loops:**
  Real organizations have multiple loops (operational, coordinating, strategic). What matters is not only whether a loop is closed locally, but whether feedback flows **across levels** and synchronizes in time.

1.5 How to read (and use) the model

If you want to use this document as a practical tool, take one concrete unit of work (a release, a meeting, a policy, a reorg) and walk it through the model:

- What **effect** should it create in reality?
- What **guiding intent** was behind it—and was it clear enough to make feedback evaluable?
- Is the **signal** compared against the guiding intent—or does it get lost?

- Where does the **signal** become visible—and when?
- Who can make a **binding decision** based on that signal?
- When does that decision become **effective**—and does it really change what work happens next?

The answers quickly show whether you're looking at a *team problem*—or a *system problem* (decision, capital, alignment). And that's exactly what the Work–Feedback Loop is for: **coupling reality to the system so adaptation doesn't happen by accident, but becomes structurally reliable.**

2. Base model – The Work–Feedback Loop

Learning ability depends on coupling. Therefore, we must first define what exactly is coupled. The base model in this document reduces organizational learning ability to an elementary relationship.

Work → Feedback → Work

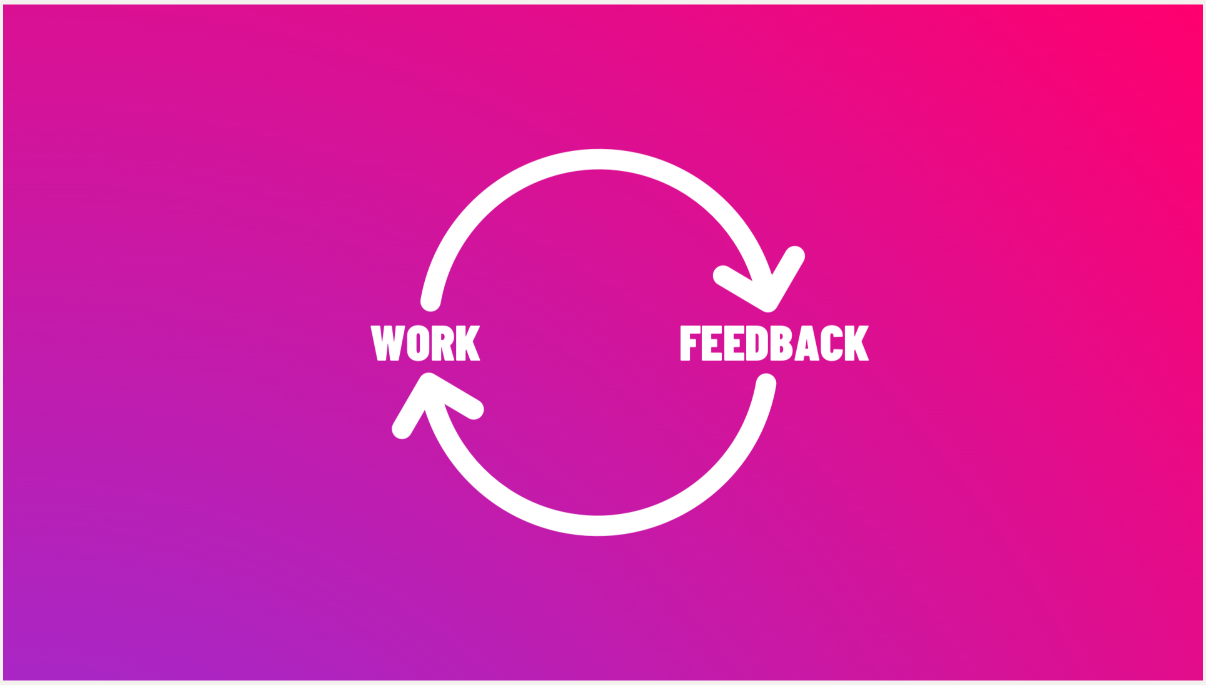

Figure 1: Work-Feedback Loop

It is important to understand that this cycle does not begin with Work. It begins at any point. The illustration describes a **chain of effects**, not a rigid **chronological sequence**. In reality, the elements often run in parallel: while a team is already delivering new work, feedback from earlier work flows back. The circular representation shows structural dependency, not a sequential process.

In the following sections, we take a closer look at the elements. Guiding intent—as a prerequisite for feedback to become evaluable—is covered in the Feedback section (2.2).

2.1 Work

Work refers to any action that produces an effect in reality. To give an idea of what work can be, here is an incomplete list:

- A delivered product increment
- A price change
- A changed service structure that directly affects customers

What matters for the model is not the internal activity within the organization, but the real effect in the organization's environment. In the Work–Feedback Loop, only work that produces an effect counts. If there is no effect, the learning signal is missing.

2.2 Feedback

Feedback is the observable reaction of reality to work. This can be:

- Usage behavior
- Market reactions
- Qualitative feedback (e.g., from real usage situations)

Feedback in the sense of this model is a **sufficiently valid signal**. Fast but misleading signals do not shorten the Work–Feedback Loop—they generate **Actionism** (fast activity without learning gains).

Crucially: a signal only becomes informative through comparison with the **guiding intent**. Without an expectation, there is no deviation, and without deviation, no learning impulse. This is precisely why an unexpected signal is valuable—it shows that reality diverges from the assumption.

An internal opinion round without reference to observable effects, for example, is not feedback. Feedback is always an **effect** that returns to the system.

2.3 Decision

Feedback alone does not generate adaptation. A crucial step is missing to close the loop, because between perception and change there is always a decision. Decision means:

- Priorities are shifted
- Resources are reallocated
- Assumptions are corrected

Without a decision, feedback remains inconsequential. Importantly: decisions can not only continue a loop, but also **start**, **change**, or **end** one. A decision to launch a new experiment opens a new feedback loop. A decision to discontinue a product closes an existing one. Decision is therefore not just an element within the loop—it is the mechanism that shapes the loop itself.

2.4 Future work

As seen in the previous section, it is important that decisions based on feedback from past work **change future work**. This is what closes the Work–Feedback Loop.

If the connection between work, feedback, decision, and influence on future work is missing, activity exists but the loop is not closed. The quality of this cycle depends not on motivation, but on the structural coupling of its elements.

2.5 Closed and broken feedback loops

From the previous chapters, a complete picture emerges: a system is capable of learning when the feedback loop is closed. This means:

1. Work creates a **real effect**
2. The work is guided by a **guiding intent**
3. The effect becomes **visible** as a signal
4. The signal is compared against the **guiding intent**
5. Decisions **respond** to it
6. Future work **changes** as a result

If any of these conditions is not met, the feedback loop is broken. The system may appear productive, but it is **not adaptive**.

The model stands in the tradition of classic feedback concepts—from Deming's PDCA cycle to John Boyd's OODA loop. It shares with these models the basic idea of a closed control loop. It differs, however, by treating time, decision latency, and capital frequency explicitly as structural variables. We will come to these terms in the following chapters.

2.6 Speed and reliability

Two properties determine the quality of the loop:

Speed – How much time passes between work and adaptation?

Reliability – How consistently does feedback lead to changed work?

A system can react quickly but unstably—or stably but extremely slowly. Organizational learning ability emerges when speed and reliability are both high. Only the balance of both creates **sustainable adaptability**. One-sided optimization leads to **chaos** (only fast) or **rigidity** (only reliable).

2.7 Reduction

From this perspective, the Work–Feedback Loop is not a framework but intentionally a reduction. It is good at reducing complex organizations and their processes to the following question:

Is the coupling between work and reality closed, fast, and reliable?

All following sections examine where this coupling is typically disrupted.

3. Two speeds – System states

In the previous chapter, the Work–Feedback Loop was described as a closed control loop. To assess learning ability, however, it is not enough to look only at the presence of the loop. What matters is the dynamics between its components.

Two speeds must be distinguished:

- Speed of **work**
- Speed of **feedback**

These two speeds are independent of each other.

3.1 Work speed

Work speed describes how quickly a system produces work that can create real effects.

Common examples include: release frequency, time-to-market, cycle time, or decision execution. Work speed is well established in many organizations. It is often visible and measurable.

3.2 Feedback speed

Feedback speed describes how quickly the effect of work returns to the system as a relevant signal.

Examples:

- Time until valid usage data is available
- Time until market reactions become visible
- Time until operational side effects are recognized
- Time until hypotheses can be verified

Feedback speed is often less transparent than work speed.

3.3 Four structural states

Combining both speeds produces **four fundamental states** that help us understand the system. These four states are not project phases—they show the system configuration. The slower of the two elements (work or feedback) acts as the structural bottleneck for learning ability.

A preliminary note: learning ability is only structurally possible in the **Learning** quadrant. All other states are forms of partial decoupling.

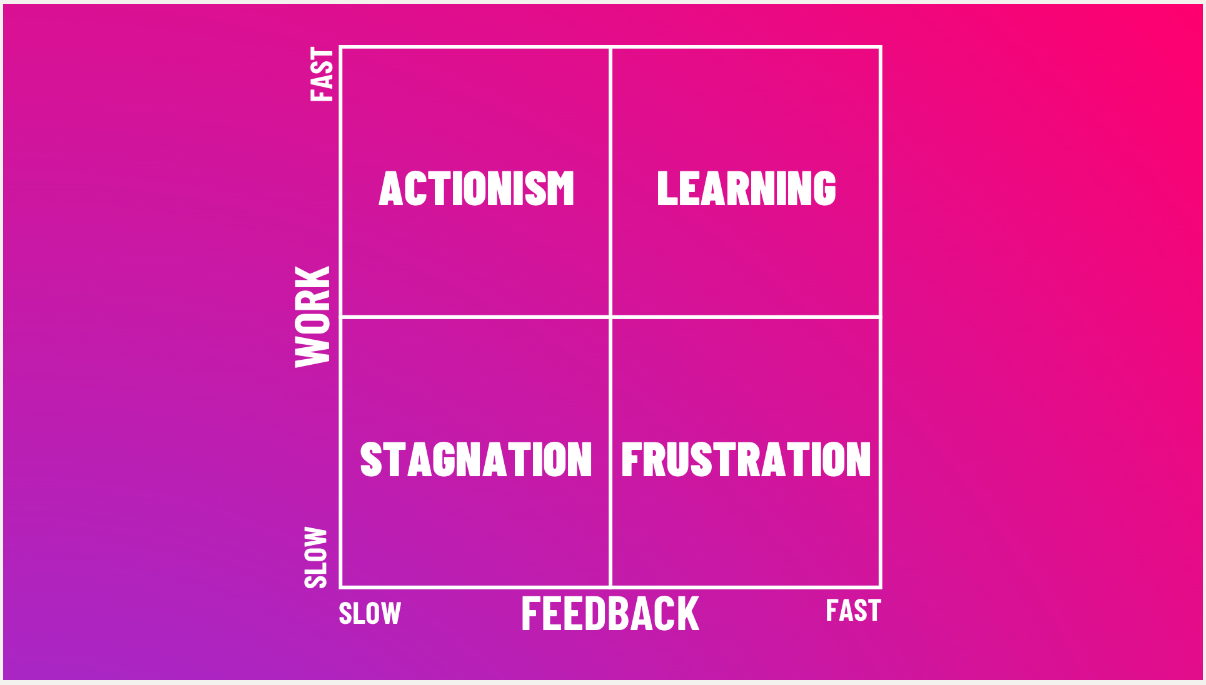

Figure 2: Diagnostic matrix

In the following sections, we look at the quadrants in detail.

3.3.1. Learning

When work is delivered quickly in small cycles and feedback reaches the system quickly, work creates an effect. That effect generates a signal that then changes decisions. The system is **adaptive**. This state must be protected.

3.3.2. Actionism

Actionism describes systems that increase their production speed without accelerating their feedback loop. When work is delivered quickly in small cycles, but feedback generated by that work flows slowly into the system, the system produces continuously but receives delayed or weak feedback. Activity is high, but the learning rate is low. This is **Actionism**.

The bottleneck here is the **processing of reality** (feedback).

Typical symptoms include feature growth without clear impact, or high release frequency without strategic adaptation.

3.3.3. Frustration

When work is slow but feedback arrives at high frequency, problems are well recognized but the system does not respond. The bottleneck lies in **work speed**: the system cannot translate insights into changed work fast enough. This is **Frustration**.

Typical symptoms include many recognized but unimplemented improvements, long execution cycles, or capacity bottlenecks.

3.3.4. Stagnation

When both parameters are slow—work and feedback—neither movement nor adaptation is significant. This leads to **Stagnation**. Here, **both** speeds are bottlenecks. The system is doubly blocked.

3.4 States are structural, not cultural

It is an important insight that these four states are not descriptions of attitude or motivation. They are **structurally anchored**.

A committed team can operate in the state of Frustration. A disciplined organization can operate in the state of Actionism. The cause lies not in people, but in coupling speed.

3.5 Diagnosis, not evaluation

This conceptual model does not treat the four states as maturity levels—they serve as a **diagnostic instrument**. It is important to understand that a system can exhibit different states at different levels.

Example: A product team can operate in the 'Learning' state (fast delivery and adaptation), while the portfolio management above it remains in 'Stagnation' due to rigid annual budgets.

According to the Theory of Constraints, the tightest point (the bottleneck) always determines the system's overall performance. Our goal is to find this bottleneck in learning ability.

The goal is to structurally identify where the bottleneck lies. Therefore, the decisive question is: *"What causes the speed differences?"*

The answer to this question leads to the time dimension of the loop.

4. Time as a structural variable

Up to this point, the Work–Feedback Loop has been described qualitatively. We have seen that learning ability depends on coupling and that states emerge from different speeds. We have established that structural adaptation is only possible in the **Learning** state.

To understand this dynamic precisely, another dimension must be introduced: **time**—because learning ability is not an abstract property but a function of time progressions within the loop.

4.1 Time between signal and change

Between the effect of work and the change of future work lies time. This time—we call it the **Feedback Response Time**—consists of three components:

1. Time until a signal becomes **visible**
2. Time until a **decision** is made
3. Time until that decision is **implemented**

This is not a mathematical formula but a **structural decomposition**. Any delay in one of the three elements extends the system's response time.

4.2 Feedback has a validity window

Feedback is not timeless—it **becomes less valuable over time**. It ages and decays. Therefore, every signal has a validity window.

For example, user behavior can change, competitors can react, or the internal context within the organization shifts.

A signal that is not translated into changed action in time loses relevance over time. The value of a signal declines. If the Feedback Response Time exceeds a critical window, feedback loses its effectiveness.

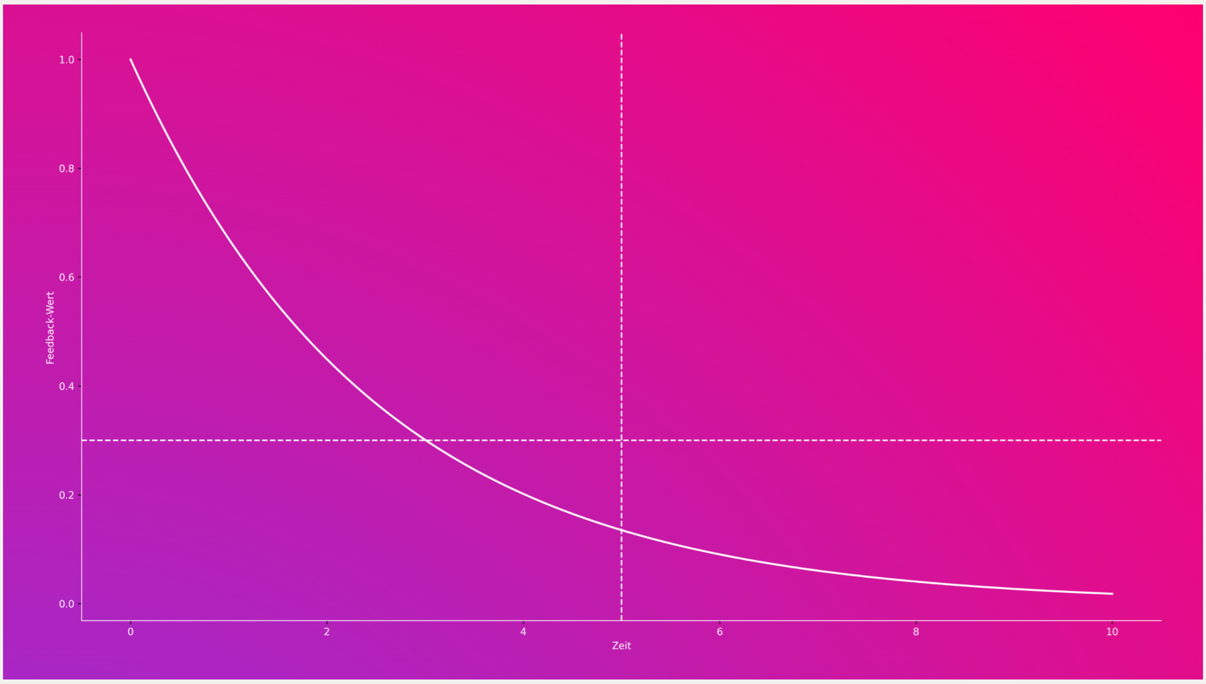

Figure 3: Feedback validity window

The graphic shows three elements:

1. The falling curve describes the value of the signal over time. It illustrates that feedback does not remain constantly relevant but loses impact with increasing delay.
2. The horizontal line marks the minimum relevance threshold. Below this threshold, the signal still exists but is no longer actionable.
3. The vertical line marks the Feedback Response Time—the point at which the system actually responds.

What matters is the position of this vertical line relative to the threshold.

If the system responds before the curve drops below the relevance threshold, the feedback is still actionable.

If it responds after, the signal is structurally devalued. The system reacts—but too late.

We can conclude that it is not only decisive whether feedback exists, but also whether it **acts in time**.

4.3 Time as a bottleneck

In many organizations, feedback is present. This is evident from the fact that problems are recognized and feedback data exists. The bottleneck therefore lies not in the signal, but in the response time.

Typical causes include multi-stage decision processes, committee structures, budget approvals, dependencies between units, and risk mitigation procedures.

These factors extend the decision or execution time.

As a result, the system shifts from the "Learning" state toward "Frustration" or "Actionism."

4.4 Speed is relative

A short Feedback Response Time is not an absolute value—it is always relative to the signal's validity window. In some systems, a week can be short. In others, a week is too late. The decisive question is: Does the system respond before the signal loses its relevance?

Learning ability only emerges when response time and signal relevance are synchronized.

The decomposition of the Feedback Response Time shows that not all delays are alike. Particularly critical is decision time—because this is where it is determined whether feedback actually produces consequences. In the next section, we therefore examine decision latency as an independent structural variable.

5. Decision latency

In the previous section, the Feedback Response Time was described as the sum of signal, decision, and execution. This decomposition already shows that not all delays have the same effect.

5.1 What is decision latency?

Decision latency describes the time span between the moment a relevant signal becomes visible and the moment a binding decision is made.

This time is often invisible, as it hides in coordination loops, committee processes, budget approvals, and many other elements. The longer this phase lasts, the greater the structural decoupling between reality and action.

5.2 Production speed vs. decision latency

A particularly critical case arises when production speed exceeds decision-making ability.

When decisions are made more slowly than new work is produced, the loop becomes structurally decoupled.

The operational system continuously generates new work while strategic or prioritizing decisions lag behind. The consequence is often that work accumulates, course corrections are delayed, and feedback does not act synchronously. The system moves faster than it can orient itself.

5.3 Symptoms of high decision latency

High decision latency frequently manifests as:

- Priority changes with significant delay
- Discussions without binding conclusions
- Backlog of initiatives
- Operational teams waiting for approvals
- Strategic insights without implementation

In such systems, feedback is not the problem. The problem is the **processing of feedback**.

5.4 Decoupling as structural risk

When decision latency exceeds production cadence, a form of decoupling emerges. Operational units work while strategic orientation falls behind. The system can thereby enter the state of Actionism: high activity with low learning rate.

Equally, such systems can enter the state of Frustration—when decision latency slows effective work speed to the point where insights exist but cannot flow into changed work fast enough.

Decision latency thus acts as a **structural bottleneck for learning ability**.

5.5 Latency is not a question of motivation

It should be noted that decision latency rarely arises from a lack of willingness. It arises from structure: hierarchy depth, diffusion of responsibility, risk minimization, budget cycles, or governance mechanisms.

This makes clear: learning ability is not a property of culture, but **of time and coupling**.

The next structural coupling layer concerns not only decisions, but capital.

6. Capital as a second coupling

Up to this point, we have examined the Work–Feedback Loop primarily at the operational and decision-related level. But organizations are not only operational systems—they are also capital allocation systems. Work does not arise in a vacuum but within financial constraints.

Thus, alongside the operational loop, a second coupling layer exists: **the capital loop**.

6.1 Capital cycles

Capital is typically allocated in **cycles**. We know forms such as annual or quarterly budget planning and portfolio decisions. These are often linked to investment approvals and business case logic.

These cycles have their own frequency—and in many organizations, it is significantly slower than the operational production frequency.

6.2 Coupling ratio

What matters is the ratio between capital frequency and production frequency. The more tightly coupled the two are, the faster an organization can respond financially to operational insights. The further the frequencies diverge, the greater the structural rigidity.

6.3 Structural rigidity

When the capital frequency is significantly slower than the production frequency, an asymmetry emerges. The operational system can learn quickly, but capital decisions respond only at long intervals.

The consequences are familiar. Insights remain **without effect**, or experiments **cannot be scaled**. Course corrections are **financially blocked**. The system may appear operationally adaptive, but it is strategically rigid.

6.4 Capital as a frequency limiter

Capital cycles act as a frequency filter. They limit how fast an organization can structurally respond.

Even when feedback emerges quickly, decisions are made quickly, and teams deliver quickly, adaptability remains limited by the fact that capital is only periodically redistributed.

In such cases, the bottleneck lies not in the Work–Feedback Loop, but in **capital coupling**.

6.5 Consequence for learning ability

Organizational learning ability does not end at teams or product decisions. It ends where capital can be realigned. If capital frequency is not synchronized with production frequency, a structural limit to adaptation emerges.

The next level of this analysis concerns not individual loops, but their nesting.

7. Nested loops

Up to this point, the Work–Feedback Loop has been examined on a single level: operational work creates an effect. That effect generates feedback. Feedback changes decisions. Decisions change new work.

In real organizations, however, there is not just one loop. There are multiple loops of different scope and frequency.

7.1 Three levels of coupling

In simplified terms, three levels can be distinguished:

1. **Operational loop**
   Cadence: days or weeks
   Focus: execution, delivery, immediate impact
2. **Coordination loop**
   Cadence: weeks or months
   Focus: prioritization, dependencies, resources
3. **Strategic loop**
   Cadence: months or years
   Focus: direction, positioning, portfolio, business model

Each of these levels has its own decision cycles, feedback sources, and time constants.

A note on framing:
This structure draws on established models of modern organizational development (e.g., *Flight Levels*).

The key difference lies in focus: while models like Flight Levels primarily describe the **topology** of collaboration (Who talks to whom? Where does work flow?), the Work–Feedback Loop examines the **chronology** and **frequency** (How fast does the system learn?).

We use these levels here not to design communication structures, but to make the **temporal asynchrony** between operational urgency and strategic rigidity measurable.

7.2 Frequency differences

The cadence of these loops differs.

Operational loops run faster than coordinating ones, and coordinating ones faster than strategic ones. This is not inherently problematic. Different scopes require different cadences. It becomes problematic only **when feedback does not flow between levels**.

7.3 Alignment

Between levels, implicit coupling ratios exist. When the strategic level responds only rarely to operational reality, a growing gap emerges.

The consequence is that the strategic direction remains constant even though operational signals suggest change. The operational units then optimize **locally** without achieving systemic adaptation. A form of **phase shift** emerges—operations and strategy run asynchronously and work against each other.

7.4 Disconnected Agility

We call the above situation **Disconnected Agility**. It describes the state in which operational loops work fast while strategic or coordinating loops remain sluggish.

In this state, the system appears agile at the team level but remains structurally unchanged.

Typical patterns we can recognize in this situation: teams deliver regularly, but portfolio decisions rarely change. Experiments are conducted, but results are not reflected in budget decisions. Retrospectives generate local improvements without strategic consequence.

Here, the operational loop is closed, but the strategic loop is not synchronized.

7.5 Synchronization as a prerequisite

The insight we arrive at here is that **organizational learning ability** does not arise solely from a fast operational loop. It only arises when **feedback flows along levels** and is translated into decisions at each level in a timely manner. Learning ability is therefore not only a property of individual teams, but a **property of nested systems**.

The question we must ask is not only whether the loop is closed, but whether the loops across levels are aligned with each other.

With this, all structural components of the conceptual model are named:

- Coupling between work and reality
- Guiding intent as the benchmark for feedback
- Two speeds (work and feedback)
- Feedback Response Time
- Decision latency
- Capital frequency
- Nested loops

In the next section, we bring this model together as an analytical instrument.

8. The conceptual model as an analytical instrument

The Work–Feedback Loop does not describe a process model. It defines neither roles nor events, nor artifacts nor implementation steps. It reduces complex organizations to a structural core question:

Is the system able to respond to reality in time?

This reduction is deliberate—it enables analysis without prescribing interventions.

8.1 Diagnosis before intervention

The model is not suited for direct optimization. It is suited for diagnosis.

The following guiding questions are central:

1. What is the real effect, and is it observable?
2. Was the guiding intent clear enough to make the feedback evaluable?
3. How quickly does this effect become visible as a signal?
4. How long does it take for a decision to follow?
5. How long does execution take?
6. Which loop is currently the bottleneck?
7. Is capital synchronized with operational reality?
8. Are strategic and operational loops aligned?

Only when these questions are answered can an intervention be meaningfully chosen.

8.2 Bottleneck logic

In every system, a dominant bottleneck exists at any given time. It may lie in signal transparency, decision latency, execution capability, capital allocation, or level alignment.

The model allows this bottleneck to be located without prematurely changing processes.

8.3 Measurability

Not all components need to be precisely quantified, but every element has a time dimension. How long until a market signal is available, a priority is changed, a budget is shifted, or a strategy is adjusted. Even rough estimates make structural differences clearly visible.

The strength of the model lies not in mathematical precision, but in structural clarity.

8.4 A different view of agility

From the perspective of this conceptual model, agility is not a collection of practices or methods.

In this model, agility is the ability of a system to compare feedback against a guiding intent and translate it into changed work in time. A system can use Scrum and still be structurally sluggish. A system can reject formal Agile methods and still be highly adaptive. What matters is not the label, but the coupling speed.

8.5 Summary of the model

Organizational learning ability is a function of time, coupling, latency, frequency, and synchronization. The Work–Feedback Loop offers a structured perspective on these relationships. It does not replace methods. It evaluates their structural impact.

With this, a conceptual model is in place that allows agile work to be analyzed independently of frameworks.

Glossary

Actionism

State of high production speed with low feedback speed. The system produces continuously but receives delayed or weak feedback.

Adaptivity

The structural ability of a system to respond to changing environmental conditions. Adaptivity describes not an attitude or culture, but the actual capacity for adaptation.

Alignment

Temporal synchronization between nested feedback levels (e.g., strategy, coordination, operations).

Bottleneck

The factor that most strongly limits the overall system's adaptation speed.

Broken feedback loop

State in which at least one coupling between work, guiding intent, feedback, decision, and future work is missing. Productivity is possible, adaptivity is not.

Capital frequency

Time constant of capital allocation. Determines how often financial constraints can be adjusted.

Capital loop

Structural coupling between capital allocation and operational reality.

Closed loop

State in which:

1. Work creates a real effect
2. The work is guided by a guiding intent
3. The effect becomes visible as a signal
4. The signal is compared against the guiding intent
5. A decision follows
6. Future work changes

Only closed loops are adaptive.

Decision latency

Time span between the visibility of a signal and a binding decision.

Disconnected Agility

State of fast operational loops with sluggish strategic or capital-related loops. Operational dynamics are present, but strategic adaptation is absent.

Feedback

Observable reaction of reality to an action ("Work"). Only becomes informative through comparison with the guiding intent. Feedback is not a meeting, not an opinion, and not planning—it is a real effect that flows back into the system.

Feedback loop

Structural relationship between action and effect, in which the effect influences future action.

Feedback Response Time

Total duration between signal emergence and effective adaptation, consisting of: time until the signal becomes visible, time until a decision is made, and time until implementation. Describes the temporal dynamics of the closed loop.

Feedback speed

Time until a real effect becomes visible as a relevant signal within the system.

Frustration (system state)

State of high feedback speed with low work speed. Problems are well recognized, but the system cannot translate insights into changed work fast enough.

Guiding intent

The expectation of what effect work should produce. Makes feedback evaluable by providing a reference point for comparison with observed signals. Must be clear enough to make feedback evaluable—and open enough to allow for unexpected signals.

Learning (system state)

State of synchronized work and feedback speeds. Work creates an effect, the effect changes decisions.

Learning ability

The structural capacity of a system to learn from reality. Describes architecture and coupling—not performance.

Nested loops

Multiple feedback levels with different time constants (e.g., strategy, coordination, operations).

Production speed (also: work speed)

Frequency at which work is produced that can create real effects.

Relevance threshold

Minimum value of a signal at which it is still actionable.

Stagnation

State of low production and low feedback speed. Neither movement nor adaptation is significant.

Structural rigidity

State of high capital or decision latency with simultaneously high operational speed.

Validity window

Time span during which a feedback signal remains actionable. If the Feedback Response Time exceeds this window, the signal structurally loses relevance.

Work

Action with real effect in the system's environment. Internal activity without external effect does not count as work in the model.