The Weekly Loop

How you actually measure the distance between what leadership decided and what the work is doing. Four moves, once a week, with the people closest to the work signing what gets reported.

METHOD **3 PAGES** · 7 MINUTE READ FOR **OPERATORS RUNNING THE LOOP** AUGUST 2026 THOMAS IGEME

THE RETURN ON WORK THESIS

HUB
Return on Work

- **What Work Costs Now** — what it costs
- **Chief Work Officer** — who owns it
- **The Weekly Loop** — how you run it
- **Five Ways Work Drifts** — what you see
- **Reading a Portfolio** — across a fund

Six papers, one argument. The hub is Return on Work. Full library at tlpartners.biz/library.

THE ARGUMENT IN ONE PARAGRAPH

The comparison between stated priorities and real work has always been possible. It has been a person: a chief of staff who reads everything, forms a judgment, and raises it on Monday. That works and it does not scale, so most companies run it once a quarter and call the result a business review. Run weekly, the same comparison becomes a rate rather than an anecdote. This paper is the method, the failure modes, and what it costs to run by hand.

01

METHOD

Four moves. Nothing here is exotic.

The loop, in four moves

The loop is deliberately small. Anything bigger gets abandoned by week three, and a measurement abandoned in week three is worse than none, because the organization now believes it has one.

ONE WEEK

Monday

Lock the plan. The team states what matters this week. Three to five items, in their own words, small enough to be wrong about.

Through the week

Read the real state. Work leaves traces in the places it already happens. Nobody is asked to log anything new.

Thursday

Confirm or correct. The people closest to the work see a draft picture of their own week and fix what is wrong.

Friday

Score the gap. Plan against confirmed reality, per priority, with a shape attached to each divergence.

The team defines the work

The first move carries more weight than it looks. **The team says what matters, and the instrument holds the organization to an honest comparison against the team's own answer.** Instrumenting the work does not mean deciding from above what the work is. If the plan comes down from a planning system, the loop measures compliance with a document. If the plan comes from the team, the loop measures the thing everyone actually cares about, which is whether the week went where the people doing it believed it should.

The definition of the work is therefore refreshed weekly, by the people doing it. That matters more every quarter, because the work no longer holds still long enough to be fully understood before it is measured. The loop is how the understanding stays current.

02

DESIGN CHOICE

The one that makes the signal trustworthy.

Why a person confirms it

The third move is the one that decides whether any of this survives contact with an organization. A machine can read how the week went and draft a picture of it. That draft goes back to the people closest to the work before it goes anywhere else, and they confirm it or correct it.

Nothing unsigned reaches a leader

That single choice does two things at once. It takes the blank page away from the person reporting, who now edits a draft instead of starting from nothing, which is the difference between a two-minute task and a twenty-minute one. And it keeps the signal honest, because a person confirms what the machine saw, and nothing reaches a leader that someone closer to the work has not signed.

Skip that step and you get the failure every reporting system eventually produces. A number arrives on a leader's desk that the team recognizes as wrong, nobody has standing to correct it, and within a month the team is managing the instrument rather than the work. The confirmation step is what stops the loop becoming a surveillance product, and it is the reason people keep using it after the novelty wears off.

METR RANDOMIZED TRIAL, JUL 2025

WHY NEITHER THE MACHINE NOR THE PERSON IS TRUSTED ALONE

The case for confirmation is not a courtesy. **In a randomized trial, experienced developers using AI were 19 percent slower, while believing they had been 20 percent faster.** That is a 39-point error in self-assessment, by capable people, about their own week, in the direction that flatters. Self-report on its own is not a measurement.

The same gap shows up in usage data, where self-reported AI use runs roughly three times low. So a loop built only on what people say is wrong in a predictable direction, and a loop built only on what a machine observes is wrong in ways nobody can contest. Reading first and confirming second is the only order that corrects both.

SAFETY IS A DESIGN REQUIREMENT, NOT A NICETY

Drift is normal. Every team drifts, every week, and a team that reports zero drift is a team that has learned what the instrument rewards. The loop only works where naming drift early is cheap and hiding it is expensive. If a drift reading is used in a performance conversation once, the readings go clean and stay clean, and you have spent the instrument to win one argument.

03

OUTPUT

What actually moves upward.

What reaches a leader

The loop produces one page. Anything longer gets skimmed, and a skimmed instrument is a decorative one.

The gap	The fastest drift	The blind spots	The trend
Plan against confirmed reality, per priority, this week.	The single priority moving away quickest.	Priorities with no real work reported at all.	The direction across weeks, which is the rate.

The trend is the point. A single week's drift reading is close to noise, because any given week contains a fire. Four weeks of readings against the same priority is a fact about the organization. That is the move from anecdote to rate, and it is why the loop is weekly rather than quarterly: a quarterly cadence produces four data points a year, which is not enough to see a rate at all.

One state matters more than any number in that page. A priority the board still believes is on track, green on the status field, and yet when you ask the teams, no one is reporting real work against it. **The blind spot is what the loop exists to catch**, and it catches it in week two, while there is still quarter left to use. The shapes drift takes, and the distinction that keeps them honest, are in The Five Ways Work Drifts.

04

By hand, and instrumented

COST
You can run this by hand. Here is the price.

Nothing in the four moves requires software. A capable chief of staff has been running this loop manually for as long as the role has existed: read the goal tool, sit in the standups, talk to the teams, form a judgment, raise it on Monday. Where that person is good, the organization gets a real version of this and should keep doing it.

What it costs is the honest part. Running the loop by hand takes a senior person most of a day each week, which is the reason it happens monthly at best in most companies. It carries one person's judgment rather than the team's own confirmation, so it is contestable in exactly the moment it matters. It covers the teams that person can physically reach, which is a handful. And it stops entirely when they are on holiday, which means the record has gaps precisely when the organization is least supervised.

ALYN, BUILT FOR THIS LOOP

That is the gap Alyn was built to close, the product we incubated at TL Partners for exactly this. It sits in Slack and runs the four moves every week. It reads how the work actually went, drafts the first picture, asks the people closest to the work to confirm or correct it, and rolls up the one page above. Over time it measures more than how far the work has drifted. It measures how fast an organization pulls the work back after the strategy moves, which is the truest read of adaptive capacity. It measures the gap. It is not another place to log the work.

> **WHERE THE LOOP DOES NOT HELP**
> This begins where a stated strategy exists. Where leadership cannot state one, the loop measures a team against a plan nobody believes, and the honest first move is to fix the strategy. It also begins past the first management layer. In a company small enough that the leaders sit inside every thread, the room is already the instrument and a weekly loop is ceremony.

If you want to know whether this is your constraint before you run anything weekly, the two-week Strategy Alignment Audit is the read that tells you.

Fixed fee, about 20 minutes from each of one or two senior leaders, and a directional answer on where the work has drifted from the plan. The argument this method serves is **Return on Work**. Read next: **The Five Ways Work Drifts**, **The Chief Work Officer**, **What Work Costs Now**. Full library at **tlpartners.biz/library**.

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