Leadership Worksheet – Terrain Mapping Checklist

Uncover the Gap Between "Official Maps" and "Real Terrain".

Use this field-tested guide to uncover the hidden gaps between how work should happen and how it really does. From invisible power dynamics to ritual behaviours, you'll learn to see the unspoken rules shaping outcomes.

Sharpen your lens, hit the ground, and redraw your map with truth, not assumptions.

1. Prepare Your Lens (Align Your Mindset)

- **Suspend assumptions:**
  "What do I believe about this team/process that might be wrong?" (e.g., your initial adhesive pump theory).

- **Define scope:**
  Operational (tasks) → *Process* (workflows) → *Organisational* (culture) → *Strategic* (vision).

- **Identify "Iceberg" focus:**
  What's visible (policies/org charts) vs. *What's hidden* (unwritten rules/power dynamics).

2. Gather "Hard Data" (The Visible Terrain)

- **Track 3 workarounds:**
  Where do people bypass official processes? (e.g., night-shift pump failures).

- **Audit metrics for placebo effects:**
  "How is this data actually measured?" (e.g., the "nut on the sensor" delamination test).

- **Map physical workflows:**
  Sketch the path of 1 critical deliverable (e.g., how a product moves from design to shipping).

3. Hunt "Soft Data" (The Hidden Currents)

- **Conduct 5 "Why + How" interviews:**
  "Why does this step exist? How do you actually do it?" (e.g., insights from your frontline staff).

- **Listen for coded language:**
  Flag phrases like "normally," "theoretically," or "they should..." ("tell tale words").

- **Observe rituals:**
  What's celebrated? What's avoided? (e.g., what culture / behaviour is celebrated).

4. Analyse Patterns (Connect the Dots)

- **Spot polarities in conflict:**
  "Where is stability clashing with change? Individual vs. team needs?" (e.g., tech startup over-pivoting).

- **Trace decision pathways:**
  Who REALLY approves things? (e.g., maintenance/logistics lovers dictating factory flow).

- **Uncover "Sacred Cows":**
  "What's never questioned here?" (e.g., Microsoft's pre-Nadella resistance to open source).

5. Validate and Adjust (Course-Correct)

- **Test 1 assumption at the Gemba:**
  Watch the process live (e.g., seek for gaps between what is wand what should be).

- **Compare stories with data:**
  Where do anecdotes contradict reports? (e.g., process / procedure gaming).

- **Update your map in pencil:**
  "What did I miss? What's changed since last week?" (e.g., evolving client needs, project scope creep).

Learning to See is an Art...

...But You Don't Have to Master It Alone. If you're ready to go beyond checklists and truly see what's driving behaviour on the floor, I offer on-the-job coaching to guide your walk, sharpen your lens, and decode what others miss.

Reach out for coaching, because real insight starts with real support.