0050 Mode Not Purity

The Summers Principle Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/0050-mode-not-purity/

The principle names two operating modes: design and default. In practice, no operator runs pure design on every dimension of the operation at every moment of every shift. The operator is designing intensely on some dimensions right now, defaulting on others, designing lightly on still others. The reality is mixed. This can produce confusion about whether the principle applies to the mixed reality or only to an idealized pure state.

The principle applies to the mixed reality. It governs mode, not purity.

Every specific outcome traces to the mode that produced it. The operator can be designing tightly on Guest Experience and defaulting on food cost management in the same shift, and the principle governs both. The GX outcome traces to the design running on that dimension. The food cost outcome traces to the default running on that dimension. Two outcomes. Two modes. Same principle. Same restaurant. Same operator.

This matters because operators who expect the principle to demand purity read it as impossible and reject it. Nobody designs everything at all times. No operator can. The principle does not require that. What it requires is that the operator know which mode is running on which dimension — and that they be able to trace each outcome to the mode that produced it.

Mixed operations are the normal state. The operator's work is not to eliminate the mixing. The operator's work is to see the mixing clearly and to shift the ratio deliberately toward more design over time on the dimensions that matter most.

Which dimensions matter most is a strategic question that gets its own treatment in the fundamentals. Perspective governs how the operator reads which dimensions are worth designing against. Product, People, Performance, and Profit each name their own dimensions and their own priorities. The principle at F0 does not tell the operator which dimensions to design first. It tells the operator that on every dimension, one mode is running, and the outcomes on that dimension trace to that mode.

Once the operator sees this, the work becomes diagnostic rather than judgmental. The operator does not ask am I designing enough — a question that has no useful answer, because enough is

undefined. The operator asks which dimensions am I currently designing, and which am I defaulting on, and what are the outcomes on each. That question has answers. And the answers point at where to design next.

Mode not purity also resolves a specific kind of guilt that struggling operators sometimes carry. They read the principle, feel the weight of design as the correct mode, and interpret every dimension they are defaulting on as a personal failure. This is neither useful nor accurate. Default is not failure at a moral level. Default is the causal state of any dimension not being designed against. Every operator has defaulted dimensions right now — because every operator has finite capacity, and the operation has more dimensions than any operator's capacity can cover at full design intensity.

The question is not whether the operator has defaulted dimensions. Everyone does. The question is whether the operator knows they are defaulted, and whether they have chosen the defaulted dimensions consciously, and whether the ratio of design to default is shifting toward design over time.

This is what mode not purity buys the operator: honesty without paralysis. The operator can look at their operation and say design is running here, default is running there, both are producing outcomes, and I know which is which. That is running the principle. It is not perfection. It is not pure design. It is clarity about mode.

The principle is not judging the operator on the current ratio. The principle is asking whether the operator can see the ratio, and whether they are moving it deliberately in the direction they choose. That is the operational stance the principle requires. Nothing more. And nothing less.