3250 Control Snapback

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3250-control-snapback/

Control Snapback is the most common failure mode of incomplete Role Transfer — and the most invisible one.

The operator informally delegates a domain. The hire makes a competent decision inside it. The operator did not agree with the call — not because the standard was missed, but because it was not the call the operator would have made. So the operator retrieves the domain. Explicitly, by overriding the decision in the moment. Or implicitly, by doing the task again themselves, quietly, the way they would have done it.

The hire registers the retrieval. Not as a formal announcement — as a signal. The signal says: your authority has a boundary you did not know about, and the boundary is wherever the operator's preference begins. The hire adjusts. They stop making calls at the edge of that boundary. They start checking in before deciding. They shrink the territory they are willing to own to the territory they are confident the operator will not retrieve.

Then the operator notices the hire is not taking initiative. Is escalating too much. Is not leading the way the role requires. And the operator concludes the hire is not ready for the role — without seeing that the hire's passivity was trained in, one retrieval at a time, by the operator's own behavior.

Control Snapback is not malicious. It is almost always well-intentioned — the operator genuinely believes they are helping, maintaining the standard, or catching a mistake before it compounds. The impact is the same regardless of the intent. The hire learned that ownership is conditional. Conditional ownership is not ownership. It is employment with extra steps.

The diagnostic: if the operator finds themselves overriding a decision that met the documented standard, the override is Control Snapback — even if the operator's way would have been better. Better is not the standard. The standard is the standard. If the standard needs to change, that conversation happens at [The Ten-Minute Close], not at the moment of execution in front of the cast.

Pairs with: [Role Transfer], [Role Drift], [The Four Override Patterns], [The Ten-Minute Close], [Authority To Execute], [The Real Accountability Model]