3710 The TrustAtDistance Problem

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3710-the-trustatdistance-problem/

The operator has built a system that works at one location with the operator in overwatch nearby. Now the system has to work at a location where the operator is rarely present.

Three failure modes wearing one costume.

The operator runs the second unit through the first unit's leadership team. The kitchen manager from Unit 1 starts answering questions for Unit 2's kitchen manager. The front lead from Unit 1 starts coaching Unit 2's front lead. On the surface this looks like leadership development. Underneath it is the operator avoiding the work of building Unit 2's own leadership. Unit 2 never becomes its own operation — it becomes a satellite of Unit 1.

The operator runs the second unit by visiting it. The drop-ins multiply. The operator is at Unit 2 three days a week to "keep an eye on things." Unit 2's leader never gets to actually lead because the operator is always there. Unit 1 starts to drift because the operator's overwatch has been pulled to Unit 2. Both units suffer — Unit 1 from neglect, Unit 2 from the operator's hovering.

The operator runs the second unit by exception. The unit-level leader only hears from the operator when something is wrong. No coaching cadence. No standards conversations. No leadership development. Just "why did this happen." The leader runs the unit defensively, optimizing for not getting called, not for running the operation. The system bends toward the operator's silence rather than toward the standards.