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The Team System

Most teams do not fail because people do not care. They fail because the work lives in too many places at once. One task is in an email. Another is in someone's memory. A third was mentioned in a hallway and never written down. A decision was made on Tuesday, but by Friday no one can agree on what was actually decided. Someone is waiting for someone else, but neither person knows it. The work itself might be simple. Keeping track of the work is what breaks down.

The Team System is a practical, named way to run a team so that does not happen. It is not software. It is not a personality test. It is not a meeting about meetings. It is a small set of shared habits and shared records that any team can keep on paper, in a notebook, in a shared document, or in whatever simple tool the team already uses. It has five parts that work together: clear roles, a shared task list, a check-in rhythm, a decision record, and a problem log. When those five parts are in place, everyone knows their part, nothing important depends only on memory, and problems get solved early while they are still small.

This system helps team leads, supervisors, and anyone who has ever been handed a team and told to "keep things moving." It helps new workers, too, because a new person can read the task list, the roles, and the decision record and understand how the team works without having to guess or interrupt everyone with basic questions. It helps experienced workers because it protects them — their good work is visible, their decisions are recorded fairly, and they are not blamed for a task they were never given or a decision they never heard about.

Why does this matter in real workplaces? Because employers do not only need people who can do a task. They need people who can work inside a team without creating confusion for everyone around them. A team that runs a clear system finishes more work, makes fewer repeated mistakes, argues less about facts, and treats people more fairly. The Team System teaches you how to be that kind of teammate and that kind of lead — step by step, week to week, in plain language you can use on your very next shift.

What You Will Learn

- What The Team System is, its five parts, and how the parts protect each other when one part is weak.
- How to write clear roles so every person knows what they own, what they help with, and what is not theirs to carry.
- How to keep one shared task list that shows the work, the owner, and the due date in a way anyone can read at a glance.
- How to run a check-in rhythm — daily, weekly, and monthly — that is short, steady, and useful instead of long and draining.
- How to keep a decision record so choices are remembered accurately and new team members can learn why things are done a certain way.

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- How to keep a problem log that turns complaints and repeated frustrations into fixes, without blame.
- How to run the whole system week to week, including what to do when someone is out, when work surges, and when the system itself needs a small repair.

Lesson 1 — Clear Roles: Everyone Knows Their Part

A role is the part a person is responsible for on a team. It is not the person's whole job title, and it is not a list of everything they have ever done. A role, in The Team System, answers three simple questions for each person: What do you own? What do you help with? And what should people bring to you first? When those answers are written down and shared, a team stops wasting energy on the two most common role problems: two people doing the same work without knowing it, and important work that nobody does because everyone assumed someone else had it.

Think about a kitchen in a busy restaurant. If nobody owns the dish station for the night, dishes pile up even though everyone walked past them. If two people both think they own the register and a third person thinks no one does, money and customers get confused. The same thing happens in an office, a warehouse, a clinic waiting room, a cleaning crew, and a retail store. The task is rarely mysterious. The ownership is. Clear roles fix ownership before the shift starts, not after something goes wrong.

A good role description is short enough to fit on an index card and clear enough that a new person understands it on their first day. It names the main outcomes the person is responsible for — not every tiny step, but the results they must make sure happen. For example, "Owns the morning opening checklist: unlock, lights, registers counted, and opening note posted by 8:30 a.m." is a role statement. "Helps with stocking when the delivery arrives" is a help statement. "Bring schedule questions to her first" is a contact statement. Together, those three lines prevent a dozen small confusions.

Roles also protect people from being overloaded in silence. When roles are written, a lead can see at a glance that one person owns six major things while another owns one. That imbalance is hard to see when roles live only in people's heads. Written roles make unfair workloads visible, and visible problems can be fixed. They also protect a person who says no. If a task is not in your role and not on the task list under your name, you can point to the system — kindly and factually — instead of having a personal argument about it. The system carries the boundary, so the person does not have to fight for it alone.

Roles need a backup, too. Every important role should name who covers it when the main person is out sick, on vacation, or called away. The backup does not need to be an expert. They need to know the basics, know where the instructions live, and know who to call if something unusual happens. A team without backups is a team that stops whenever one person has a bad week — and everyone has a bad week sometimes. Naming backups in advance is kindness and good business at the same time.

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Finally, roles change. A person learns a new skill. A project ends. A store changes its hours. When that happens, update the written role the same week. An old role sheet that no longer matches reality is worse than no sheet at all, because people trust it and are misled by it. In The Team System, the role list is a living record, reviewed at the monthly check-in, corrected whenever life changes it first.

The Steps

1. List every person on the team by name, including part-time workers, regular helpers, and the lead.
2. For each person, write what they own in one or two short sentences focused on outcomes, not personality. Start each line with a verb: owns, prepares, checks, delivers, answers, closes.
3. Under each person's ownership, write what they help with — the work they support but do not own.
4. Add one line for each person: "Bring ___ questions to this person first." This creates a clear first stop and stops everyone from asking everyone.
5. For every role that would stop the team if the person were out, name a backup and write what the backup needs to know on day one.
6. Read the full role list out loud with the team. Ask two questions: "Is anything listed twice under two owners?" and "Is anything important not owned by anyone?" Fix both problems on the spot.
7. Post the role list where the team can see it — the same place as the task list — and date it. When a role changes, update the date and tell the team what changed.

A Worked Example

A small medical office has a front desk team of four: Ana, Ben, Carla, and Deshawn, supervised by Priya. Before The Team System, mornings were chaotic. Phones rang while two people both tried to check in the same patient and no one restocked the intake forms. Priya sat down with the team for thirty minutes and wrote roles. Ana owns check-in and the waiting list. Ben owns phones and appointment confirmations. Carla owns forms, supplies, and the end-of-day count. Deshawn owns check-out, referrals paperwork, and helping patients who need extra time or an interpreter line. Backups were named: Ben backs up Ana at check-in, Ana backs up Ben on phones. They posted the list by the phones. Within a week, the double check-ins stopped, forms stopped running out mid-morning, and when Ben was out sick on Thursday, Ana covered phones using the written backup note without Priya having to reorganize the whole office by text at 6 a.m. Nothing about the people changed. The roles became visible, and the confusion had nowhere left to hide.

Common Mistakes

- **Writing job titles instead of real roles.** A title like "Associate" tells a new person nothing. Write what the person actually owns this month, on this team.

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- **Giving ownership to a group instead of a person.** "The team owns the inbox" means no one checks the inbox. Every owned thing needs one name beside it.
- **Making one person own everything important.** This creates a bottleneck and burns out your strongest worker. Spread ownership and train backups.
- **Never updating the role list.** People change shifts, learn skills, and leave. Review roles monthly and after any staffing change.
- **Using roles as a weapon.** "That's not my job" said with contempt hurts a team. Roles are for clarity and fair load, not for refusing to help in an emergency. Help first, then fix the role list later if the emergency keeps repeating.

Lesson 2 — The Shared Task List: One Place for All the Work

If roles answer "who owns what area," the shared task list answers "what exactly needs to be done, by whom, and by when." It is the heart of The Team System, and its first rule is simple: there is one list, and all the team's work goes on it. Not one list for the lead and another list the team keeps privately. Not tasks scattered across emails, texts, sticky notes, and memory. One list, in one place, that everyone on the team can see. When a new task appears, it goes on the list. When a task is finished, it is marked finished on the list. When someone wonders what to do next, they look at the list — not at their mood, not at whoever is loudest.

A useful task on the list has four parts. First, a clear action written so a person who did not hear the original conversation can still do it: "Call the supplier and confirm Friday's delivery time" beats "supplier thing." Second, one owner — a single name. Two owners usually means zero owners, because each waits for the other. Helpers can be noted, but one person is responsible for making sure it happens. Third, a due date or due time. Work without a date drifts, and drifting work always lands at the worst moment. Fourth, a status that anyone can update honestly: not started, in progress, waiting, or done. "Waiting" deserves special respect — it should say what the person is waiting for, such as "waiting on manager approval" or "waiting on parts," so the lead can unblock it instead of wondering why nothing moved.

The list should be sorted or grouped in a way the team agrees on — by due date is the most common and the most honest, because it shows what is urgent without anyone having to argue about it. Keep finished tasks visible for a short time, such as until the weekly check-in, before archiving them. That short history matters: it proves work was done, it helps answer "didn't we already handle that?" questions, and it gives quiet workers credit that loud workers often get by default. Fairness lives in records.

Size matters, too. A task should be one piece of work a person can finish in one work session or one day. "Plan the whole event" is not a task; it is a project hiding on a task list. Break it down: book the room, order the food, send the invitations, print the signs. Each smaller task can be owned, dated, and finished. Big vague tasks sit untouched because nobody knows where to start. Small clear tasks get done, and the feeling of finishing them is what keeps a team's energy up through a long week.

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The lead's job with the list is not to hover over it. The lead's job is to keep it true. That means adding tasks the moment they are agreed, removing tasks that were cancelled so the list does not fill with ghosts, and asking about overdue tasks with curiosity instead of anger: "I see this was due yesterday — what's in the way?" Most overdue tasks are overdue for a real reason: missing information, missing supplies, a customer who has not replied, or a task that was bigger than it looked. The list surfaces those reasons early, which is exactly what it is for.

The Steps

1. Choose one home for the list that the whole team can reach — a shared document, a simple app the team already uses, or a whiteboard plus a photo of it saved each Friday for teams who work on paper. One home only.
2. Write each task with four parts: a clear action, one owner by name, a due date or time, and a status.
3. Break any task that would take more than a day or has more than one major step into smaller tasks, each with its own owner and date.
4. Sort or review the list by due date at every check-in, so the most urgent work is always seen first.
5. When you finish a task, mark it done the same day. When you get blocked, change the status to "waiting" and write what you are waiting for.
6. When a task is cancelled or replaced, mark it clearly instead of quietly deleting it, so no one wonders later what happened to it.
7. At the weekly check-in, archive the finished tasks into a simple history — a dated page or folder — and start the new week with a clean, honest list.

A Worked Example

A warehouse team of six kept losing track of returns. Boxes arrived, were set "somewhere safe," and were found days later by accident. Their lead, Marcus, started a shared task list on a simple board by the packing station and a matching shared note on their phones. Every return became a task the moment it arrived: "Process return #4821 — inspect, log, restock or tag damaged," owner named, due by end of next shift. Within two weeks, average processing time dropped from three days to same-day for most returns, not because anyone worked faster, but because no box could hide anymore. One task sat at "waiting — damaged tag printer" for two days, which told Marcus exactly what to fix: he ordered a replacement printer that Friday instead of urging the team to "stay on top of returns." The list had shown him the real problem, and it was not effort. It was equipment. That is what a shared list does when it is kept honestly — it tells the truth about the work, including the parts that are management's to fix.

Common Mistakes

- **Keeping a private second list.** The moment the real work lives somewhere else, the shared list becomes theater and the team stops trusting it.

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• **Writing vague tasks.** "Handle the Johnson account" cannot be finished, checked, or handed off. Write the next concrete action.

• **Assigning a task to two people or to "everyone."** One owner, every time. Helpers are welcome; shared ownership is not ownership.

• **No due dates.** Undated tasks are wishes. Even a rough date — "by Friday" — is better than none, and rough dates can be renegotiated honestly at a check-in.

• **Punishing honest status updates.** If a worker is scolded for marking a task "waiting" or overdue, they will start hiding problems until they explode. Thank people for surfacing trouble early.

• **Letting finished tasks pile up forever.** Archive weekly. A list buried in old completions hides today's work.

Lesson 3 — The Check-In Rhythm: Short, Steady, and Human

A rhythm is a pattern that repeats on purpose. In The Team System, the check-in rhythm is how the team stays in contact with the work and with each other without living in meetings. It has three beats. A daily check-in, short enough to do standing up, answers: what did we finish, what are we doing today, and what is blocked? A weekly check-in, a little longer, answers: what did we accomplish this week, what is coming next week, and what needs a decision or a fix? A monthly check-in answers the bigger questions: are our roles still right, is our workload fair, and what should we improve about how we work together? Three beats, three different depths, all of them predictable — and predictability is the point. When people know when they will be heard, they stop interrupting each other all day to be heard right now.

The daily check-in should be ten to fifteen minutes at most, at the same time each day, ideally near the start of a shift. Each person speaks briefly in the same order, using the same three prompts: yesterday (or last shift) I finished…, today I am working on…, I am blocked by… — or "no block." The lead writes any block directly onto the task list or problem log during the check-in, so nothing said in the room evaporates when the room empties. If a topic needs a long discussion, it does not belong in the daily check-in. Note it, name who owns the follow-up conversation, and set a time for it. Protecting the short length of the daily check-in is what makes people willing to come to it every day.

The weekly check-in, thirty to forty-five minutes, is where the system breathes. Review the task list together: celebrate what finished, look honestly at what slipped and why, and set next week's main tasks with owners and dates. Review the problem log: which problems were solved, which need more time, which need the lead's help or a decision from above? Look one week ahead for known pressures — a delivery, an inspection, a staff absence, a busy season day — and plan for them while planning is still cheap. End the weekly check-in with one round of appreciation or one small improvement suggestion. Teams that only ever discuss problems start to dread their own check-ins. A steady note of recognition keeps the rhythm human.

The monthly check-in, about an hour, zooms out. Review the role list: does it still match reality? Review workload fairness: who carried the heaviest load this month, and should ownership

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rotate or rebalance? Review the decision record for any decision that is not working and needs to be revisited openly rather than quietly ignored. And ask the system question: is The Team System itself helping us? If a part of it feels like busywork, shrink it or fix it together. A system the team helps shape is a system the team will actually keep.

Check-ins also need a human rule: listen to understand the work, not to grade the person. A worker who reports a block is giving the team valuable information early. A worker who reports a mistake at a check-in is trusting the team. Both acts should be met with problem-solving first. Correction and training have their place, but if check-ins become the place where people get embarrassed in front of coworkers, people will simply stop telling the truth there — and a check-in without truth is worse than no check-in at all, because it creates false confidence.

For teams that do not share the same hours or building — remote workers, split shifts, field crews — the rhythm still works. The daily check-in can be a short written update in a shared place by an agreed time, read by everyone. The weekly check-in can be a call. What matters is not the room. What matters is the steady beat, the same three questions, and a written record that lands on the task list, the decision record, or the problem log.

The Steps

1. Set the three beats and protect their times: daily (10–15 minutes), weekly (30–45 minutes), monthly (about an hour). Put them on the calendar as recurring events.
2. Use the same three prompts at every daily check-in: what I finished, what I am doing today, what is blocking me.
3. During each check-in, write blocks, new tasks, and decisions down immediately in the right record — task list, decision record, or problem log.
4. Keep long discussions out of the daily check-in. Name an owner and a separate time for anything that needs more than two minutes.
5. At the weekly check-in, review finished work, overdue work and its real reasons, next week's tasks, and the problem log — in that order.
6. At the monthly check-in, review roles, workload fairness, backup coverage, and whether any past decision needs to be revisited.
7. End every weekly and monthly check-in with one appreciation or one concrete improvement to the system itself, and record it.

A Worked Example

A home-cleaning company has three crews who rarely see each other. Their owner, Luisa, used to manage by constant texting — dozens of messages a day, and still jobs were missed. She replaced the texting storm with rhythm. Each crew lead posts a three-line daily update in a shared note by 8 a.m.: yesterday's jobs done, today's jobs, any block (a missing key, a broken vacuum, a client reschedule). Luisa holds one thirty-minute video call every Monday with all three leads to review the week, assign special jobs, and check the problem log. On the first Monday of each month, they spend an extra thirty minutes on roles and workload — which crew is overloaded, who needs training on a new service, which backup driver can cover vacations.

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Within a month, Luisa's daily texts dropped to a handful, missed jobs nearly disappeared, and one crew lead said the best part was knowing that if she raised a problem on Monday, it would actually be looked at again the next Monday. The rhythm created trust because it kept its promises: what was written down came back around.

Common Mistakes

- **Letting the daily check-in grow into an hour.** Long daily meetings teach people to hide, multitask, and dread the rhythm. Keep it short; schedule separate talks for big topics.
- **Cancelling check-ins whenever things get busy.** Busy weeks are exactly when the team most needs fifteen minutes of shared clarity. Shorten if you must; do not skip.
- **Talking about work without writing anything down.** If it is not added to the task list, decision record, or problem log during the check-in, assume it will be forgotten.
- **Turning check-ins into blame sessions.** Grade the work in private coaching when needed; keep the group check-in focused on the work, the blocks, and the plan.
- **Only the lead talks.** A check-in where one person lectures is an announcement, not a check-in. Every person speaks, briefly, every time.
- **No monthly zoom-out.** Without it, unfair workloads and outdated roles quietly harden into resentment. The monthly review is where the system heals itself.

Lesson 4 — The Decision Record: How Choices Get Remembered

Teams make decisions every day: which supplier to use, which process to follow, how to handle a difficult customer situation, what to do when two good options conflict. Most of those decisions are spoken once, in a room or on a call, and then trusted to memory. Memory, unfortunately, edits. A week later, two honest people remember the same decision two different ways. A month later, a new worker asks "why do we do it this way?" and nobody knows. A decision that turns out badly gets quietly denied by everyone who was in the room. The decision record exists to stop all of that. It is a simple, dated log of what was decided, who decided it, why, and when it should be reviewed if it is not working.

A good decision entry is short — four to six lines is plenty. It carries the date, the decision stated in one clear sentence, who made or approved it, the main reason in one sentence, and any review date or condition ("review after the first month" or "revisit if costs rise above…"). That is all. It is not meeting minutes. It does not record every opinion that was voiced. It records the outcome, so the outcome can be followed, taught, and — when evidence says so — changed without shame. Changing a recorded decision is not failure. It is the system learning. What the record prevents is the worst outcome: a decision being changed silently, differently, by different people, until the team is no longer following any shared way at all.

The decision record also settles a fairness issue that poisons many teams: credit and blame. When a decision succeeds, the record shows whose judgment it was. When a decision fails, the record shows it was made with the information available at the time, often by a group or a lead

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— which stops the unfair habit of blaming the newest or quietest person for a choice they did not make. And when a worker is told to do something that later gets questioned by a higher manager, the record is their protection: "On May 3, the team decided, approved by our lead, to…" Honest workers deserve that protection, and good leads provide it on purpose.

Where do decisions live? In one place, with the other system records, in date order, readable by the whole team. Some decisions are sensitive — pay, discipline, private personnel matters — and those do not belong on a team-wide record; they belong in proper confidential channels. The decision record is for how the work is done: processes, priorities, schedules, standards, suppliers, tools, and customer-handling choices. If you are unsure whether a decision belongs on the shared record, ask: "Will the team need to follow this or understand it later?" If yes, record it. If it is about a private matter concerning one person, keep it private and record only the work impact, if any, without personal details.

Teach new team members to read the decision record in their first week. It is the fastest honest history of the team they are joining: why the morning routine runs in that order, why that supplier was chosen, why that shortcut was banned. A new person who understands the "why" follows the process with judgment instead of just obedience — and judgment is what you want standing at the counter when an unusual situation walks in.

The Steps

1. Create one decision record in the same place as your task list — a dated log, newest decisions easy to find.
2. Record every work decision that the team must follow for more than a day, on the day it is made, before the day ends.
3. Write each entry in a fixed format: date, the decision in one sentence, who decided or approved it, the main reason in one sentence, and a review date or condition if the decision is a trial.
4. Announce new decisions at the next daily check-in and point to the written entry, so no one has to rely on hearing it secondhand.
5. When a decision changes, add a new entry that names the old one: "Replaces the April 10 decision on…" Never quietly edit or delete the old entry.
6. At the monthly check-in, scan the month's decisions. Mark any that need review, and record the review outcome as its own entry.
7. Have every new team member read the recent decision record during their first week, and answer their "why do we…?" questions from it.

A Worked Example

A retail team kept arguing about returns without receipts. One worker refused them, another accepted them with a manager code, a third accepted them only on weekends. Customers noticed the inconsistency and complained — fairly. At a weekly check-in, the store lead, Tom, led a short discussion and made the call: "From today, returns without a receipt are accepted for store credit only, up to a set amount, with lead approval." He wrote it in the decision record with

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the date, his name as approver, the reason ("consistent, fair treatment for customers; limits loss"), and a review date in sixty days. He announced it at the next two daily check-ins. The arguments stopped, because the question now had an address: the record. At the sixty-day review, the team looked at the numbers together, saw losses were small and complaints had dropped, and recorded a second entry keeping the policy. Months later, when a district manager questioned a store-credit return, the worker at the register could show the dated entry instead of defending herself from memory. The record had done its job three times: it created consistency, it allowed a fair review, and it protected the worker who followed it.

Common Mistakes

- **Recording opinions instead of decisions.** The record is not a debate transcript. One clear sentence stating what was decided is what the team needs.
- **No name and no date.** An undated, unsigned decision cannot be followed up, reviewed, or fairly credited. Every entry needs both.
- **Editing old entries when decisions change.** Quiet edits destroy trust in the whole record. Add a new entry that replaces the old one, openly.
- **Recording private personnel matters.** Pay, discipline, and health matters never go on the shared record. Record only work-process decisions.
- **Deciding in the hallway and recording "later."** Later rarely comes. Record it the same day, ideally in the check-in where it is announced.
- **Treating the record as a trap.** If workers fear the record will be used to punish reasonable judgment calls, they will stop making decisions and wait for the lead on everything. Use it to learn and to protect, visibly.

Lesson 5 — The Problem Log and Running the Week: Fixing Things Without Blame

Every team has problems that are not one person's task: the printer that jams every Friday, the form customers always misunderstand, the delivery that is always late, the step in the process where errors keep happening in the same spot. Without a system, these problems live as complaints — repeated in the break room, felt by everyone, owned by no one, and fixed never. The problem log is The Team System's answer. It is a dated record of recurring or important problems, what is being tried to fix them, who owns the fix, and what happened. It turns "this place never fixes anything" into a visible, checkable promise: problems raised here get an owner, an attempt, and a follow-up date.

A problem entry needs five things: the date it was raised, a plain description of the problem and its effect ("the label printer jams two or three times every Friday, delaying shipments by about an hour"), who raised it — naming the raiser honors them for speaking up — who owns the fix, and the next check date. Notice what the entry does not contain: blame. The log describes problems in processes, tools, information, and workload — never as character attacks on a person. "The closing checklist is missing the alarm step, so the alarm has been missed twice" belongs in the log. "Jake is careless" does not. If a problem truly involves one person's performance, that is a

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private coaching matter for the lead, handled with dignity outside the shared log. Keeping the log blame-free is not softness. It is strategy: people report problems early only when reporting is safe, and early problems are cheap problems.

Not every problem gets fixed forever, and the log should be honest about that. Some problems get a full fix. Some get a workaround that reduces the harm. Some, after a real attempt, get a recorded decision: "We accept this for now because the full fix costs more than we can spend this quarter; review in October." Even that outcome respects the team, because it is written, explained, and dated — very different from a problem that was raised and silently dropped. What destroys morale is not an unfixed problem. It is a problem that disappears into silence after someone was brave enough to raise it.

Now put all five parts together and run the week. Here is the steady weekly pattern of The Team System in practice. Monday (or your first workday): weekly check-in — review last week's finished tasks, set this week's tasks with owners and dates, check the problem log's due follow-ups. Each day: daily check-in — finished, today, blocked — with blocks written into the task list or problem log on the spot. Through the week: work the list, update statuses honestly, record decisions the day they are made. End of week: archive finished tasks, carry unfinished tasks forward openly with new dates and a note about why, and glance at the decision record to be sure nothing announced verbally went unrecorded. Monthly: the zoom-out on roles, workload, backups, and the system itself. That is the whole machine. Five parts, three beats, one honest set of records.

What about hard weeks — someone quits, a surge hits, a key person is out sick? The system bends instead of breaking because the records carry the knowledge. The backup named in the role list steps in. The task list shows exactly what the absent person owned, so it can be reassigned in minutes instead of reconstructed from memory and panic. The decision record tells the covering lead why things are done as they are. The problem log can be paused for a week without shame — just note "paused during surge, resume next Monday" so the pause is a decision, not a disappearance. Teams that run a system in calm weeks discover its real value in the storm weeks: less chaos, fairer reassignment, and no single point of failure sitting in one exhausted person's head.

Finally, start small if your team has no system at all. Week one: role list and task list only. Week two: add daily check-ins. Week three: add the decision record. Week four: add the problem log and hold your first monthly review. A month from now, your team will have a working system built at a pace nobody resented — and you will have this course's core skill: not just doing work, but building the structure that lets a whole team do good work together, week after week.

The Steps

1. Create the problem log beside your other records, with columns or sections for: date raised, problem and its effect, raised by, fix owner, what is being tried, and next check date.
2. Write every entry about the process, tool, information, or workload — never about a person's character. Move individual performance concerns to private coaching.

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3. Give every problem a fix owner and a check date at the moment it is logged, even if the first step is only "investigate and report back by Thursday."

4. At each weekly check-in, review every problem whose check date has arrived. Record the outcome: fixed, workaround in place, still working with a new date, or accepted for now with a reason and a review date.

5. Thank the person who raised each problem, by name, at the check-in where it is reviewed. Make raising problems visibly worthwhile.

6. Run the week on the full pattern: weekly check-in to set the work, daily check-ins to keep it moving, decisions recorded same-day, finished tasks archived at week's end.

7. Once a month, review the whole system — roles, list habits, rhythm, decision record, problem log — and make one small improvement together rather than letting flaws accumulate.

A Worked Example

A dental office's problem log began with an entry from the newest assistant, Ruth: "Patients keep arriving for appointments they think are an hour later than booked. About three a week. Raised April 7." The fix owner was the office manager, Sam. His investigation found the cause in three days: the confirmation text template stated the arrival time, not the appointment time, and patients read it as the appointment time. The template was rewritten to state both clearly — "Your appointment is at 10:00; please arrive at 9:45" — and the fix was recorded with a check date two weeks out. At that check, late arrivals from confusion had dropped to zero in the sample week. Sam thanked Ruth by name at the weekly check-in and noted that her entry had likely saved the office several hours of schedule chaos. Two months later the log held nine entries: five fixed, two with workarounds, one accepted with a reason (an old X-ray viewer they would replace in the next budget), and one still in progress with a current date. The staff's attitude had visibly shifted — problems were now reported in the log the day they were noticed, because the team had watched, repeatedly, that reporting led somewhere. That trust, built entry by entry, is the deepest product of The Team System.

Common Mistakes

• **Letting the log become a blame list.** The first time a person is shamed by a log entry, reporting stops. Keep entries about processes and tools, always.

• **Logging problems with no owner or check date.** An unowned problem is just a written complaint. Owner and date, every time.

• **Only logging big problems.** Small recurring annoyances — the jam, the confusing form, the missing supply — are where the log earns its keep fastest.

• **Silently dropping hard problems.** If a problem cannot be fixed now, record that honestly with a reason and a review date. Silence, not the problem, is what kills trust.

• **Trying to launch all five parts in one day.** Teams reject systems that arrive as an avalanche. Add one part per week and let each one settle.

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- **The lead keeping the records alone.** The system belongs to the team. Workers should be able to read every record and add tasks, updates, and problems themselves, with the lead keeping the records true.

Try It — Run Your Team on the System for One Week

Pick a real team you are on now — at work, in a volunteer group, in a family project, or in a class group — and run a one-week trial of The Team System. Keep it on paper or in one shared document; the tool does not matter, the habits do. Day one: write the role list. For each person, one line for what they own, one for what they help with, and name a backup for the most important role. Read it aloud or send it to the group and fix any double-ownership or unowned work you spot. Day one, continued: start the shared task list. Move every task you can think of onto it, each with one owner, a due date, and a status. Break down any task that is really a project. Days two through five: hold a ten-minute daily check-in — in person, by call, or as written updates — using the three prompts: finished, today, blocked. Write every block onto the task list or into a new problem log the moment it is spoken. During the week, start the decision record: record at least two real decisions in the fixed format, with date, decider, reason, and review note if it is a trial. Also log at least two problems in the problem log, each with a fix owner and a check date, written without blame. End of the week: hold a thirty-minute weekly check-in. Review what finished, carry unfinished tasks forward with honest new dates, check your problem entries, archive the finished tasks, and ask the team two closing questions: "What did this system make easier this week?" and "What one small change would make it work better for us next week?" Write down their answers — that is your first monthly improvement, arriving early. If the week felt clearer than your usual weeks, you have felt what The Team System is for. Keep the rhythm. Systems are not built in a week; they are built by weeks that repeat.

Fortress shares what I learned, not professional advice.

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