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Nobody Checks the Output

Your crew trusts the new tool because its work looks clean. On your next shift, pick one output and name who checks it before it goes out.

Your team got a new tool and the work got faster. Now ask who checks what it gets wrong.

Ask one plain question about the new tool: who checked its output? (DDI, AI readiness findings)

What leaders say about their tools and what happens on your floor are different things. Treat the report as a question to ask, not proof that your tool works.

Picture a plant that gets a new automatic labeler. Output goes up. Everyone is happy. Nobody changes the end-of-line check, because the labeler is “automatic.” Three weeks later a pallet ships with the wrong label on every carton. The labeler did exactly what it was told. Nobody looked.

That is not an AI story. It is the oldest story on the floor. A tool gets faster, and the check quietly disappears because the tool feels trustworthy. Speed moves the risk downstream to a place where it costs more.

AI makes this easier to miss because the output looks finished. The email reads clean. The summary sounds sure. The formula returns a number. Looks finished and is right are two different things.

Leaders measure what the tool saved. They do not measure what the tool got wrong. Time saved shows up on the scoreboard on day one. Errors show up on someone else’s desk, weeks later, with no name attached. And if the check lives in someone’s head, it dies the first busy Thursday.

Toyota built this into its lines under the name jidoka: when the system detects a problem, the equipment stops or a worker stops the line so the problem can be fixed before it travels. The point is not to distrust the machine. The point is that the system makes a problem visible the moment it happens.

Deming said to “cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality.” People quote that to say checking is waste. He meant do not rely on a final inspector to catch what the process got wrong. Build quality into how the work is done. Make errors visible early, but do not use a final inspection to excuse a broken process. That is different from having no check.

“We don’t have time to check everything.” Correct. Do not check everything. Check the one thing that, if wrong, hurts someone. Match the check to the risk. Some work needs a quick source comparison. Safety, legal and other high-stakes work still needs every required control.

Try this: pick one place your team uses AI or any new automatic tool. Name the output and who acts on it. Name the worst thing it could say with full confidence. Then set the stop point: one named person checks one specific thing before it goes out, like every number against the source sheet. Write it down where the work happens.

At the next huddle, ask: “What did the tool get wrong this week that we caught?” If nobody has caught a mistake, find out whether the check is used and what kinds of mistakes it can actually find.

Fast is a feature. Checked is a standard.

Go deeper: Agree on the Defect Before You Count It.

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