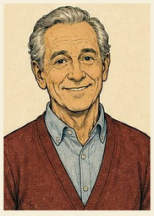
THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE · S03E07

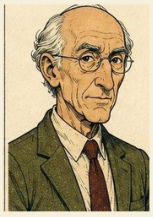
The Distance Between Done And Used

The usage looks like success. The customer is already gone.











Original dramatic voices inspired by historical perspectives; not historical quotations. The companies and workplace cases are fictional composites.

01 · After The Customer Leaves



At Morrow Supply, Ruth completes an ordinary refund before reopening the assistant to produce the required summary. Eli and the manager see the same usage count but a different path through the work.

MANAGER
Ruth is one of our most consistent users.

RUTH
Thank you. Can I stop?

DRUCKER
We have arrived at an unusually efficient awards ceremony.

MANAGER
Stop using it?

RUTH
Stop telling it what I have already done so it can recommend that I do it.

DEMING
Is that how you were trained to use it?

RUTH
No. It is how I get the customer served and the summary filed.

JACOBS
Show us the last return.

RUTH
Unopened box, matching order, within the ordinary policy. I checked the record, approved it, then asked the assistant for the explanation. The record still needs that explanation.

DRUCKER
So the summary has a job. Does the recommendation?

MANAGER
It helps people apply the policy consistently.

ROGERS
Eli, is that what it helps you do?

ELI
Sometimes. I am still learning what counts as ordinary.

MANAGER
That is why I want everyone to start there. Otherwise we never give the new process a chance.

JACOBS
Ruth has given it a place. Just not the place on your diagram.

DEMING
Which means the usage report cannot tell you which process is being used.

RUTH
It can tell you I was here after the customer wasn't.

02 · The Person Who Followed Instructions



Eli follows the recommended route on a difficult opened-box return. The software step completes, but the customer decision remains unresolved.

DRUCKER
Let us see a case where the recommendation mattered.

ELI
This opened box. The customer said the contents were damaged when he collected it. The assistant found the opened-item rule and recommended referring it to a supervisor. I sent the request.

DRUCKER
And then?

ELI
The customer waited. I could see the request had been sent. I couldn't tell him when anyone would answer.

RUTH
I would have asked the supervisor at the loading desk.

ELI
I didn't know I could. He was helping a contractor collect an order.

JACOBS
There is your working system. A person, a location, a judgment about when to interrupt. The screen has an arrow marked escalation.

MANAGER
That sounds like an argument for more training.

ROGERS
What would you train him to say when the supervisor is busy?

MANAGER
That a customer is waiting.

ELI
They were both customers.

DRUCKER
Good. This is a management decision now. Whose wait takes precedence?

JACOBS
Ruth knows how to negotiate it. That knowledge matters.

ELI
Ruth also knows everyone. When I interrupt, I feel as though I am cutting in.

JACOBS
Yes. I was about to recommend following Ruth's path. I should ask whether it is open to you.

ROGERS
Did you tell anyone you were stuck?

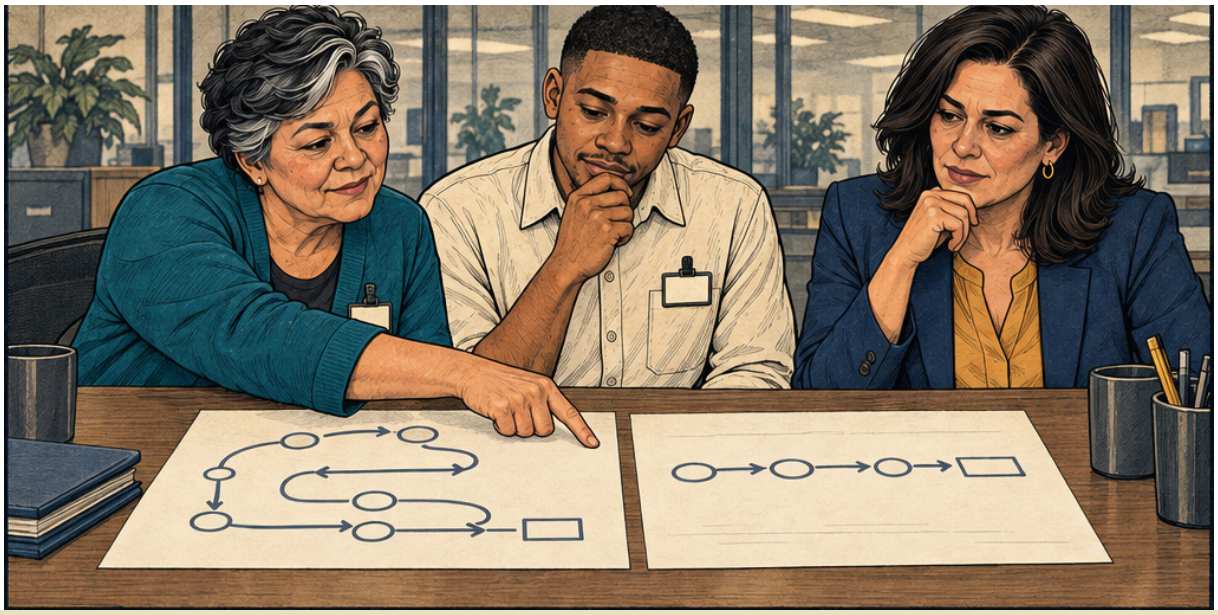
ELI
I asked whether I had sent it correctly. They said yes.

DEMING
You asked about the step. They answered about the step. The customer's problem remained exactly where it was.

RUTH
I thought he needed help with the software.

ELI
I did. But after that I still needed help with the return.

03 · A Better Answer Can Still Be Late



The group separates useful explanation and evidence assembly from a recommendation step that can duplicate experienced judgment and still arrive too late.

MANAGER
I don't want to lose what we've built because the first weeks are awkward.

DRUCKER
Nor should you. But protecting the investment requires finding what it accomplishes. Can the tool finish the ordinary case without drafting a new opinion about the policy?

MANAGER
We could make the policy checks more direct.

RUTH
Please. I do not need an essay on an unopened box.

ROGERS
Eli might need an explanation.

RUTH
He can ask me.

ELI
I already ask you a lot.

ROGERS
That is a different cost. A person can be willing to help while the person needing help becomes reluctant to ask.

DRUCKER
Then a useful explanation is part of the result for a new clerk. I was too quick to treat it as spare packaging.

DEMING
Keep that distinction when comparing work. Experienced and new clerks do not have the same starting conditions.

HOST

Yesterday's Mastermind recap makes a distinction that may help here: stable rules, AI interpretation, and human authority are different parts of a workflow. A recurring task can become dependable without making every part more intelligent.

MANAGER

Are you suggesting we take AI out of the returns assistant?

DRUCKER

Out of the part where a fixed rule is enough. Perhaps.

JACOBS

Keep the interesting question. On an opened box with a disputed history, it could help assemble what happened. That is different from inventing discretion the clerk does not have.

DEMING

And a program can route an exception without a model composing the route each time. But the program cannot make a busy supervisor available.

MANAGER

So the most visible new feature could become the smallest part of the process.

RUTH

It would still get a chair. It wouldn't need the whole counter.

ROGERS

Does that feel like failure to you?

MANAGER

A little. We asked people to learn this. Now we tell them some of it wasn't necessary?

ROGERS

You could tell them that using it taught you something. That is a harder sentence if you have already asked them to call it a success.

DEMING

Test the simpler route. A tidier training deck will not tell us whether a customer gets an answer.

04 · Who Gets To Be Done?



The project team can close its delivery obligation while the customer benefit remains unproved. Someone must own the space between those facts.

MANAGER
The project team delivered what we asked for. I cannot keep their work open indefinitely.

DRUCKER
Close their delivery obligation honestly. Keep the business benefit unproved honestly. Those statements can coexist.

JACOBS
Who owns the space between them?

MANAGER
Operations. Me.

DEMING
With what freedom? May you remove a feature, or only persuade more people to use it?

MANAGER
I can change the desk procedure. Product changes need the project sponsor.

DRUCKER
Then you and the sponsor have a decision to make together. Calling you the adoption owner while forbidding subtraction would give you a sales job inside your own company.

RUTH
With us as leads.

ROGERS
Reluctant ones, apparently.

RUTH
I have qualified myself as a prospect for fewer screens.

JACOBS
There is an FCG question in this: where is velocity actually needed? Ruth's routine decision is already quick. Eli's wait is somewhere else. Speeding up the same recommendation for both could leave both problems intact.

DEMING
And Ruth's quick decision is not automatically correct. We should check the old route too.

RUTH
Fair. Familiar does not mean flawless.

DRUCKER
I began by asking whether the recommendation had a job. Now I think we need to ask whether this is one job. Ruth needs less duplicate work. Eli needs a reliable way to learn and decide. The customer needs a sound answer in either case.

ROGERS
And Eli needs to be able to say the explanation did not help.

MANAGER
Without being marked down for failing to adopt it.

DEMING
Yes. A compulsory click would make your report easier to complete and your question harder to answer.

JACOBS
I will accept a shared route if newcomers can actually travel it. I will not defend a shortcut that works only when everyone knows your name.

RUTH
Then we should teach it with a return in front of us. Not another tour of the menus.

ELI
Could I do the return, while you watch?

RUTH
Yes. And I will try not to do it with my eyebrows.

ROGERS
That may be the advanced course.

05 · One Return In Front Of Us



Completed returns become a bounded replay: ordinary cases and exceptions, experienced and new users, the current assistant and a simpler policy-check route.

MANAGER

I can settle who covers the exception queue. But what do we test before asking the sponsor to change the product?

DEMING

On Monday, take completed returns: ordinary ones and exceptions. Use copies. Have Ruth and Eli each work through examples with the current assistant and with a simpler policy-check route.

ELI

Won't the second way be easier because I have just seen the answer?

DEMING

It may. Alternate which route comes first, and record familiarity and help received. We are looking for where work gets stuck. This small exercise cannot prove a general advantage.

DRUCKER

Follow each attempt to a justified decision and an understandable customer explanation. Starting a request is not finishing a return. Count review, correction, help and waiting, not just the time the assistant is thinking.

ROGERS

Tell them what the exercise is for before they begin. No individual league table. Eli must be able to stop and say, “I don't know what to do next.” That is a useful finding.

JACOBS

Include the awkward moment when the supervisor is occupied. Name a backup and a visible waiting state. If nobody can answer, the clerk needs an honest message and the existing supervisor route, not permission to improvise a refund.

MANAGER

I own the desk procedure and coverage. The sponsor owns the proposed software simplification. Ruth and Eli both attempt the examples during scheduled work. Then Ruth helps Eli practice where he gets stuck. No live refunds from the exercise.

DEMING

Before comparing results, you and the policy owner agree what counts as a correct disposition and acceptable explanation. If an example is disputed, label it unresolved. Do not treat the old answer as truth merely because it happened first.

DRUCKER

At Friday's review, decide among keeping the assistant as it is, narrowing it to useful explanation and evidence assembly, or pausing its recommendation step. Bring the sponsor the attempts, not an adoption slogan.

MANAGER

What would make us stop immediately?

DEMING

Any test that touches a live refund. Any recommendation that exceeds the clerk's authority stops that attempt and requires policy review. If the simpler route loses required evidence or misclassifies a return, it has not earned replacement either.

JACOBS

Repair the failed step and repeat the example before resuming that route. Keep the existing authorized service process for customers while you learn.

ROGERS

What if Eli needs longer because he is learning?

DRUCKER

We budget learning time. We do not call it waste, and we do not hide it. If it produces later independence, that may be worth the investment.

DEMING

“If” matters. A good session with Ruth beside him cannot establish independence. After the initial review, he needs another agreed, supervised attempt with unfamiliar examples. Further live use needs a separate operating decision.

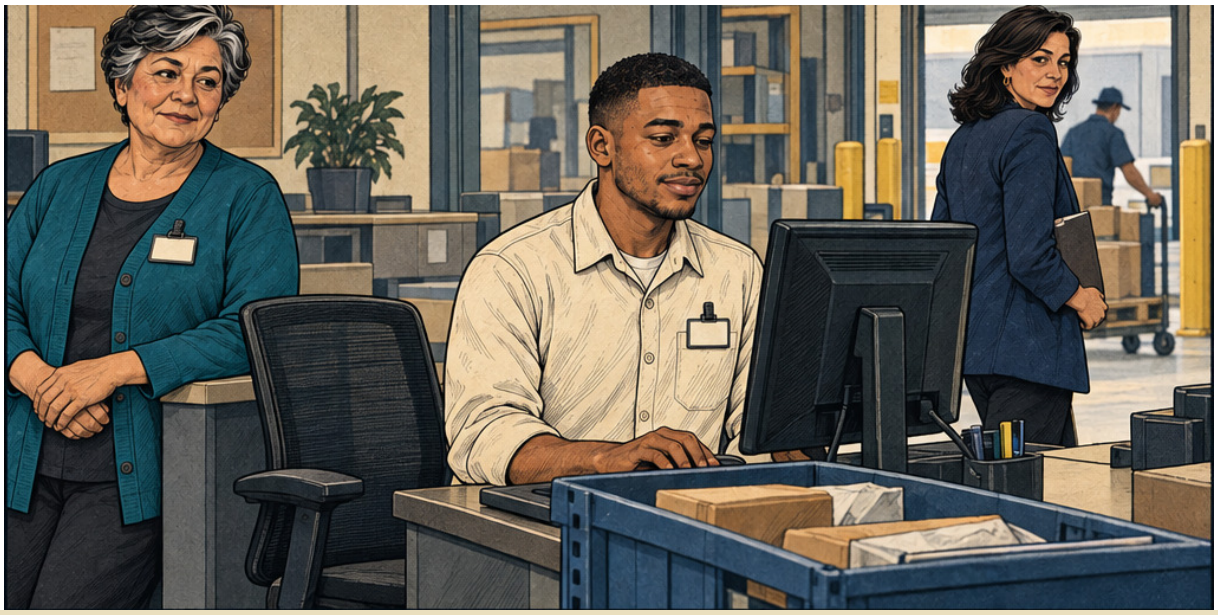
MANAGER

Then Friday can authorize the next test. It cannot declare the benefit realized.

DRUCKER

Correct. The decision can be timely without the conclusion being premature.

06 · The Report Changes



The proposed test may reduce reported usage. Ruth and Eli begin different work while the manager arranges the coverage needed to learn from it.

MANAGER
The usage count may go down if we do this well.

DEMING
It may. Customer waiting may go down, stay the same, or reveal another bottleneck. We will have a better question either way.

RUTH
Can the report say I helped remove a step?

MANAGER
It can say we are testing whether that step should exist.

RUTH
You are getting cautious.

MANAGER
I have been sitting with Edwards.

DEMING
Standing. There aren't enough chairs at this counter.

JACOBS
The assistant has one.

ROGERS
Perhaps it can share.

Field Note From The Arena

Morrow's usage report counted Ruth's after-the-fact paperwork and Eli's attempt to make a decision as the same success. Their needs were different, and neither click count established a customer benefit.

Velocity To Value, an FCG operating philosophy, directs attention to the path from an idea to a useful consequence. Here it exposes a limit in adoption work: the owner of the benefit must be able to propose subtraction, including less AI. Innovation Management supports the choice to keep, change, or stop a capability on evidence rather than on its delivery history.

On Monday, compare actual decision paths using completed examples, including new and experienced users. On Friday, choose the next bounded change; do not confuse that choice with proof of durable value. Preserve correctness, authority and the customer explanation while measuring the whole effort.

Carry this question: Can your adoption effort succeed by making the product smaller?