

Companion reference tool to *The Silent Handshake* by Pradeep Billa. This card summarizes the three-gap framework at a glance. For full mechanics, protocols, and case studies, see the complete book at silenthandshake.com.

Appendix A: Diagnostic Framework Card

The Silent Handshake Framework at a Glance

Three gaps. One sequence. One framework.

The Silent Handshake isolates three distinct failure points in ERP programs. They are separate, but they are not random. They form in causal order and often surface in reverse order, with operations discovering last what design created first.

Gap	What Fails	When It Forms	Primary Intervention
Assumption Gap	Beliefs are treated as facts	Before decisions	VALID Protocol
Rationale Gap	Decisions survive without their reasoning	After decisions	Decision rationale record
Transition Gap	Operations inherits a system without enough context to explain it	After implementation	TEM + structured knowledge transfer

Sequence rule: Assumptions shape decisions. Decisions lose their reasoning. Operations inherits the result.

Gap 1: Assumption Gap

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Teams say, "it worked in the old system," as if that were a test result.
- A vendor default is accepted without a context check.
- Edge cases never enter the test plan because everyone assumes the standard logic will cover them.
- Sign-off is treated as proof that all parties interpreted the requirement the same way.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A pure testing failure. Testing exposes the assumption late. It did not create it.

- A knowledge problem. Experienced teams are often the ones most exposed to this gap.
- A scope issue. The work can be in scope and still rest on unverified beliefs.

THREE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

1. What behavior is this team assuming the new system will preserve from the old one?
 2. Which of those assumptions has actually been tested in this system?
 3. If one of those assumptions is wrong, when would the project find out?
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Gap 2: Rationale Gap

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- The system shows what was configured but no one can explain why.
- A workaround exists, but the failure it was preventing is no longer known.
- A later team reopens a decision because the record captures only the outcome.
- A deferral looks like a defect because the original trade-off was never preserved.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- Missing documentation volume. The project may already have extensive artifacts.
- A disagreement at the time of decision. The choice may have been reasonable when made.
- A handoff failure. This gap forms before the handoff begins.

MINIMUM RECORD

Every consequential decision should preserve five fields:

1. What was decided?
2. Why was it chosen?
3. What alternative was rejected?
4. What limitation or dependency comes with it?
5. When should the team revisit it?

THREE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

1. Could a new analyst explain why this choice exists without calling the original implementer?
2. Does the record show the rejected alternative and the trade-off?

3. If the business changes in six months, would the team know when this decision should be reopened?

Gap 3: Transition Gap

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- The handoff package looks complete, but the first change request stalls on "why is it built this way?"
- Operations can run the system but cannot safely extend it.
- The next team inherits artifacts, not judgment.
- A stable go-live turns fragile months later when undocumented trade-offs are touched.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A personnel problem. The same gap appears at phase, vendor, and workstream boundaries.
- A training issue. Procedure can transfer while context does not.
- A documentation count problem. More artifacts do not replace transferred reasoning.

THREE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

1. What important reasoning would leave with the current owner if they stepped away tomorrow?
 2. What does the incoming team need to know that is not obvious from the artifacts?
 3. Has that reasoning been deliberately transferred, or only assumed to have transferred?
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Rapid Triage

Symptom	Most Likely Primary Gap	First Move
"It worked in the old system"	Assumption Gap	Run VALID
"We don't know why this exists"	Rationale Gap	Create a rationale record
"The handoff was complete, but operations still can't explain it"	Transition Gap	Trigger TEM
"All three are present"	Earliest visible upstream gap	Start with Assumption, then Rationale, then Transition

Cross-Reference

Topic	See
Assumption Gap mechanics + VALID	Chapter 4
Rationale Gap mechanics + rationale record	Chapter 5
Transition Gap mechanics + TEM	Chapter 6
CVR Protocol	Chapter 10 + Appendix E
Handshake Register	Chapter 11 + Appendix C
Decision Rationale Checklist	Appendix D
Full case index	Appendix F