

Companion tool to *The Silent Handshake* by Pradeep Billa. Run at each phase gate. Gap labels: [A] Assumption Gap [R] Rationale Gap [T] Transition Gap [CASCADE] multiple gaps active. For full framework, see silenthandshake.com.

Appendix B: Implementation Risk Assessment Checklist

How to Use This Checklist

Run this checklist at each phase gate, not at the end of the project. Each item is labeled by the gap it addresses: [T] for Transition Gap, [A] for Assumption Gap, [R] for Rationale Gap. Items marked [CASCADE] indicate conditions where multiple gaps are likely active simultaneously.

Score each item: **Yes** (condition met), **No** (condition not met), **Unknown** (status unverifiable). A pattern of "Unknown" answers is itself a risk signal. Unknown means the gap is open.

Phase 1: Pre-Project and Scoping

- The scope boundary has been documented in writing, including what is explicitly excluded. [R]
- Every term that appears in the scope document has been defined and agreed upon by both client and SI. [R]
- The legacy system behavior that must be preserved has been verified against actual system behavior, not stakeholder recall. [A]
- A named seam owner has been identified for each integration point, data handoff, and workstream dependency. [T]
- Assumptions about data quality, volume, and structure in the source system have been validated, not estimated. [A]
- Verbal commitments made during discovery or sales have been converted into written scope artifacts. [R]
- Subject matter experts whose knowledge is essential to configuration have been identified — and their availability through go-live has been confirmed. [T]

Phase 1 Risk Signal: If more than two items are "Unknown," resolve them before design. Unknown at this phase compounds through every subsequent phase.

Phase 2: Design and Blueprint

- Design decisions include documented rationale, not just the decision itself. **[R]**
- Assumptions embedded in the design have been explicitly listed and attributed — not left implicit. **[A]**
- Every exclusion confirmed during design has been written into a formal scope artifact, not held in meeting notes. **[R]**
- A process exists to capture reasoning context when a key designer transitions off the project or changes roles. **[T]**
- Business rules that differ between the legacy system and the new system have been identified and validated with the business owner. **[A]**
- Edge cases and exceptions to the primary design have been documented, not deferred to build. **[R]**
- The design document specifies what the system will not do, in addition to what it will do. **[R]**
- Stakeholder sign-off on the design is on record and specifies what was agreed, not just that agreement occurred. **[R] [A]**

Phase 2 Risk Signal: If legacy behavior has not been verified against current system reality before design is locked, expect UAT failures.

Phase 3: Configuration and Build

- Configuration decisions can be traced to a design decision and a business requirement. **[R]**
- The person configuring the system can articulate the reasoning behind each significant configuration choice. **[R]**
- Assumptions made during configuration have been logged, not just implemented. **[A]**
- When a configurer encounters a gap between the design and system capability, the resolution has been documented and approved. **[R]**
- AI-assisted configuration or recommendations have been reviewed against the reasoning context behind the original design, not just against the artifact layer. **[R] [A]**
- Security roles, access groups, and permission configurations have a documented owner who verified the inheritance logic. **[T] [A]**
- When configuration deviates from the design — for any reason — the deviation has been logged and approved in writing. **[R] [CASCADE]**

Phase 3 Risk Signal: If configuration decisions are made without traceable rationale, the Rationale Gap is already open.

Phase 4: Testing and UAT

- Test scripts validate business behavior, not just system behavior. [A]
- Edge cases identified during design and build are represented in the test plan. [A] [R]
- UAT sign-off specifies what was tested and what was explicitly deferred or excluded. [R]
- Defects discovered in UAT have been classified: is this a build error, a design error, or an assumption error? [A]
- Business owners participating in UAT have verified current process behavior, not recalled legacy behavior. [A]
- Open items at UAT closure have been documented with explicit owners, resolution dates, and go-live impact assessments. [R]
- Any verbal agreement made during UAT ("we'll handle that post go-live") has been converted to a written artifact. [R]
- The team can explain not just what each test verified, but what assumption it was designed to stress. [A] [T]

Phase 4 Risk Signal: "We'll handle that post go-live" is one of the Rationale Gap's most common formation points. Every verbal deferral not preserved with an explicit why is a seam that can fail.

Phase 5: Go-Live and Cutover

- Cutover runbook includes owners for each step, not just step descriptions. [T]
- Every integration handoff during cutover has a named owner who has verified the handoff is complete. [T]
- The rollback plan is documented, owned, and its trigger conditions have been agreed in writing. [R]
- Support personnel going live have been briefed on the reasoning behind configuration decisions, not just on how to operate the system. [T]
- Outstanding assumptions from earlier phases have been resolved or formally accepted as known risks. [A]

- Hypercare coverage includes someone with design context — not only support and operations staff. [T] [CASCADE]
- Post go-live data validation criteria have been specified in writing, with agreed thresholds for escalation. [R]

Phase 5 Risk Signal: Go-live is the highest-velocity Transition Gap moment in the project. Design context must travel into hypercare.

Phase 6: Post-Go-Live Stabilization

- Issues discovered post go-live are being classified by gap type, not just by symptom or ticket category. [CASCADE]
- Workarounds implemented during stabilization are documented as temporary — and have an owner responsible for resolution. [R]
- The Handshake Register is being maintained: seam owners confirmed, last-verified dates current. [T]
- Assumptions that were accepted as known risks at go-live have been revisited and either validated or resolved. [A]
- Lessons from this implementation have been captured in a format that can travel to the next implementation — not just held as team knowledge. [T] [R]
- A named owner exists for each integration, configuration area, and business process, and that ownership is documented. [T]

Phase 6 Risk Signal: Stabilization is where the Rationale Gap becomes permanent. Workarounds that are not explained become the next implementation's assumptions.

Risk Scoring Guide

After completing each phase's checklist, count responses by category.

Score	Meaning	Action
All Yes	Low risk in this gap area for this phase	Proceed. Revisit at next phase gate.
1-2 No	Contained risk	Assign owner and resolution date before proceeding.
3+ No	Elevated risk	Do not proceed to next phase without resolution plan.
Any Unknown	Unverifiable risk — treat as No	Investigate until status is known. Unknown is not acceptable at a phase gate.
Pattern of [CASCADE] items flagged	All three gaps may be active	Run Appendix A Cascade Check before proceeding.

The governing principle: A known, owned "No" is manageable. An "Unknown" is a gap already in progress. The goal of this checklist is not a perfect score. It is an honest one.

See Appendix A for per-gap diagnostic questions. See Appendix C for the Handshake Register template. See Appendix E for the CVR Protocol quick-reference cards.