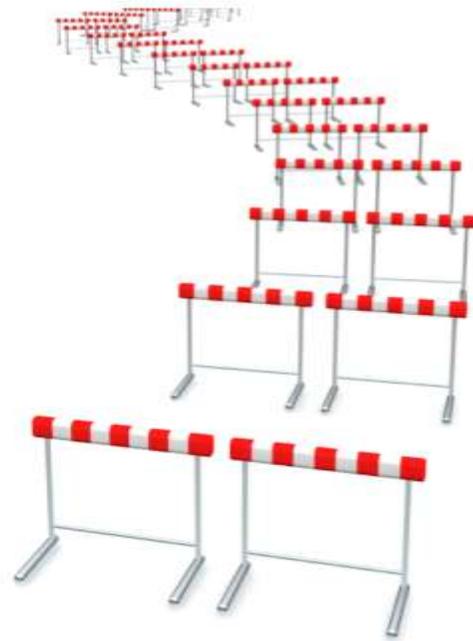


Human Hurdles

The 'drain on speed' happens in the workplace, where barriers get in the way of working effectively and efficiently. And there's a cost to being slow, as once-great organisations like Kodak have discovered all too painfully. Some of the barriers, like a lack of strategy or poor execution, are obvious. But there is a whole class of barriers that are rarely recognised even though they are often the biggest drain on speed.

This barrier is the human hurdles to performance at speed. The human hurdles all deal with how people interact (or don't interact) to get work done: how decisions are made, whether and how information is shared, how arguments are resolved, how one person's behaviour affects others around them. Here are the five most common human hurdles that we see in our work:

- 1. Don't want to go there** — Managers and executives are reluctant to deal with interaction issues, either because they don't believe they are important or are uncomfortable dealing with them.
- 2. This is just business as usual** — Accepting poor collaboration or silos as a given or as unfixable
- 3. Competition is always healthy** — In the overzealous pursuit of competition, companies create practices, policies, and structures that drive wedges between the very groups and people they want to collaborate.
- 4. We left our Ferraris in the garage** — Individual talent is left untapped because the team or organization doesn't know how to identify or use it to its full potential.
- 5. It's *them*, not me** — Not realizing how we individually add to or create barriers to interaction



Do you recognise some of these? They often manifest themselves in the grind of [unproductive meetings](#), snail's-speed projects, problems that don't stay fixed, turf wars that erupt between groups or departments, bickering and posturing between teams, or continued conflict that saps an organisation's strength. These are things that happen even in smart corporations with sound strategies and the brightest and the best employees.

Where are the human hurdles in your organisation? Start looking for the pressure points, tell-tale signs that interaction is less than optimal. Sit in on some meetings – how productive are they? Think about how many times you've had to resolve the same issues again and again. Listen to the chat at the water-cooler — what are the stories people are telling within your organisation, stories that reflect on its norms of behaviour? And, if you can bring yourself to, take a long, hard look in the mirror and ask yourself what you, personally, might be doing to contribute to the situation and what changes you could make to the way things are being done around here.

Once you become aware of the human hurdles, you will start seeing them everywhere. And once you become aware of how much they are making work in your organization slow and unproductive, you'll understand why it's important to address them.

There are many examples of organisations that have recognised a need to start shifting the human hurdles round, turning these barriers into bridges that improve communication and collaboration between the people in their organisations.