Antipatterns Travel in Packs

Your path worksheet · The Octopus Organization, Jana Werner & Phil Le-Brun · Side 1 of 2

Antipatterns rarely show up alone. They lean on each other, so the one you fix often resurfaces two links away. This worksheet helps you trace the chain from a symptom you can feel to the hop you control, test one small lever, and learn from what happens. Open the interactive antipattern map and follow along. Both parts work better with someone who sees your organization from a different seat.

Reading the map

Orange · #1 to #13
Direction and alignment

Plum · #14 to #25
Power and people

Pink · #26 to #36
Learning and customers

Same-color neighbors point to a problem one function can work on.

Different-color neighbors point to a system problem that needs a wider group in the room.

Walk up to 3 hops, then stop. A path that reaches everything tells you nothing.

Part 1: Trace your path

About 20 minutes, with one other person

Your name ..... Thinking partner ..... Date .....

Step	Your notes
1 Symptom What happened last week that bothered you? Write what you saw, not what you think caused it.	
2 Starting antipattern Which of the 36 is the closest match?	
3 Neighbors Which connected antipatterns do you also see?	Note the color of each one
4 Path Because of [A], we get [B], which leads to [C]. *If the sentence doesn't ring true in your organization, drop that hop.*	Because of [A] ▶ we get [B] ▶ which leads to [C]
5 Evidence Where in the last 30 days did you see each hop? Drop any hop you can't back up, but note which ones you dropped.	
6 Lever Which hop do you have the most control over? Find its lever in the book. Pick the smallest version you can run in 1 to 2 weeks, and write down what you predict will happen and what would tell you you're wrong.	The hop I control and the lever I'll pull I predict I'll know I'm wrong if

Next: Run your lever for 1 to 2 weeks, then turn over for Part 2.

Source: Jana Werner and Phil Le-Brun, *The Octopus Organization* (Harvard Business Review Press). The map shows where antipatterns can connect. Only you know where they do.

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Part 2: Learn from it

About 15 minutes, 1 to 2 weeks after you start the test

Date ..... **Path I tested** .....

Step	Your notes
7 What happened What did you try, and what did you observe? Facts first, interpretation second. How did it compare to your prediction?	
8 Hidden links Which other antipatterns showed up that weren't on your path? Did any hop you dropped in step 5 turn out to be real? Which hop didn't hold? Check the map.	
9 Underlying assumptions What belief or "we've always done it this way" did the test expose? Finish the sentence. Who or what is that belief protecting?	**We do it this way because we believe...** **That belief is protecting**
10 What you learned One sentence. What do you now know about your organization that you didn't 2 weeks ago?	
11 So what, now what? Based on what you found, what's your next move? Name who needs to be in the room.	☐ Pull a different lever on the same path ☐ Follow a hidden link to a new antipattern ☐ Take the assumption to my team ☐ Stop, because the path was wrong **My next move** **Who needs to be in the room**

Share what you learned

When you finish Part 2, bring what you learned to the comments on The Ink Tank, especially the assumption you didn't expect to find. Then go back to the map, pick the next symptom, and run the walk again.

Sources: Jana Werner and Phil Le-Brun, *The Octopus Organization* (Harvard Business Review Press), and "Antipatterns Travel in Packs", The Ink Tank, octopusorg.substack.com. Interactive antipattern map: public.flourish.studio/visualisation/26193019. theoctopusorganization.com