

The Transition Signal

Reading the friction before it becomes a resignation

When an experienced person goes quiet, the instinct is to try to keep them. That is often the wrong instinct, applied too late. Much of what reads as disengagement is a mislabelled transition: the person has begun outgrowing the role, and nobody has language for it, so it shows up as quiet quitting, absence, or a departure that felt sudden only because the signals were never read. This tool reads what the friction is actually made of, and points to one of four honest responses. The goal is not to retain everyone. It is to make the right decision consciously, before disengagement makes it for you.

Use it for one specific person: a valued team member you sense is misaligned, or your own situation if you are the one going quiet. Answer honestly, not hopefully. Choose one option per area, total the five scores, and read your route below.

01 Identity Fit

Does the work still fit who this person is becoming, or who they have outgrown?

- 4 The work still fits and still stretches them in a direction they want to grow.
- 3 Mostly fits, with a growing edge of parts that no longer feel like them.
- 2 They are visibly performing a version of themselves the role requires, not one they are.
- 1 The gap between who they are and who the role needs them to be has become the daily experience.

02 Energy Pattern

Is the depletion recoverable, or does the role itself drain them regardless of rest?

- 4 Normal ebb and flow; a good weekend or a lighter week genuinely restores them.
- 3 Tired, but it tracks with an identifiable, temporary pressure that will pass.
- 2 Rest helps less than it should; the drain returns within days of any recovery.
- 1 Even a genuinely restful break ends in the same heaviness. Energy was never the issue.

03 Judgment Seen

Is their actual value, their judgment and not just their output, recognised and used here?

- 4 Their judgment is actively sought and visibly shapes decisions around them.
- 3 Their judgment is valued, though not always used to its full reach.
- 2 They are measured mostly on output; the deeper judgment they carry goes largely unused.
- 1 Their value has been reduced to what they produce, and they feel it, and it is quietly insulting.

04 Trajectory

Does where this role leads point toward someone they actually want to become?

- 4 The path ahead leads somewhere they genuinely want to go.
- 3 The direction is broadly right, with some uncertainty about the destination.
- 2 The next step up is something they quietly do not want, even if they qualify for it.
- 1 Continuing on this path means becoming someone they have decided they do not want to be.

05 Root of the Friction

Is the friction situational and temporary, or fundamental to the fit itself?

THIS AREA WEIGHS MOST

- 4 Clearly situational: a specific, nameable, changeable cause sits underneath it.
- 3 Mostly situational, with a faint question about something deeper.
- 2 Mostly fundamental, dressed up as situational so it feels more fixable than it is.
- 1 Fundamental. Honestly examined, the fit itself is what has ended, not the circumstances.

READ YOUR ROUTE 17-20 Recommit · 12-16 Redesign · 8-11 Redeploy · 5-7 Release

Area 05 carries the most weight: if it scores 1, read Redeploy or Release regardless of your total; if it scores 4, read Recommit or Redesign.

The Four Routes

None is a failure. The failure is choosing none of them and calling it retention.

Recommit

STRONG FIT · FRICTION IS SITUATIONAL

What looks like disengagement is a temporary or fixable strain: workload, a specific relationship, a rough season. Name it, address the actual cause, and the fit returns. Do not mistake a hard month for a wrong role.

Redesign

RIGHT PERSON · WRONG SHAPE

They belong, but the judgment they now carry is not being used; the shape is wrong, not the person. Reshape the role around what they have become. The highest-return route, and the most easily missed.

Redeploy

RIGHT ORGANISATION · WRONG ROOM

Alignment with this role is gone and will not return, but the person is still right for the organisation. Move them deliberately before they leave the building entirely, and you keep the capability while honouring the transition.

Release

FUNDAMENTAL MISALIGNMENT · PART WELL

The misalignment is identity and direction, not circumstance; no redesign reaches it. Support a dignified exit. Handled well, this protects the person, your brand, your alumni network, and everyone who stays and is watching.

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The Misalignment Audit · The Four Rooms workshop · keynotes

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This tool supports judgement, it does not replace it.