

THE NINE-LAYER POST-MORTEM MAP

Layer-Failure Diagnosis Sheet

Take one incident or near miss and run it down the nine layers. For each layer name which one should have caught the failure, which one actually missed it, and the fix it needs.

BRING One real incident or near miss to diagnose _____

Walk the incident down the nine layers

For each layer, mark whether it was supposed to catch this failure, whether it actually missed it, and the architectural fix it needs. Leave a row blank if the layer cannot fail in the system in front of you.

Layer	Should this layer have caught it?	Did this layer actually miss it?	The fix this layer needs
L1 Foundation model - task beyond the capability ceiling			
L2 Alignment - fluency or agreement over real interest			
L3 Reasoning - locked in before thinking enough			
L4 Tool calling - a bad thought became a real action			
L5 Model routing - hard work sent to a cheap model			
L6 Planning, context and memory - drift, forgetting, wrong environment			
L7 Stopping and economics - did not halt before danger			
L8 Multi-agent orchestration - lost context, shared blind spot			
L9 Safety and governance - an uncaught error reached the world			

Diagnosis - the load-bearing miss

Name the layer that actually missed, not the layer that is easiest to see. Then state whether your proposed fix is a model fix, a harness fix, an orchestration fix or a governance fix - and whether it targets the missed layer.

Companion worksheet to **Essay 04 · The Nine Layers Where Agents Break**, in the series **Architecting the AI Coworker**. · Dr Peter McCann Strain · Fill this in against one real agent, action class or vendor. © 2026 Peter McCann Strain.

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