

THE DESIGNATED ENEMY

Pre-Mortem Analysis + Red Teaming

1. The Two Frameworks Used:

PRE-MORTEM ANALYSIS

Before you start, imagine the project has already failed spectacularly. Then work backwards and list every reason why.

RED TEAMING

Assign a group whose actual job is to attack the plan — to find the flaw, argue the opposite, and be rewarded for it.

How the Two Connect (Fusion Logic)

A pre-mortem unlocks the doubts people are too polite to raise. Red Teaming makes someone officially responsible for raising them. One creates permission to see failure; the other creates an owner for it.

2. Application: NASA (USA)

Background — What Happened and Why

- In high-stakes engineering, the deadliest risk is a concern that someone had but never voiced.
- Teams under schedule pressure drift into consensus — dissent feels like disloyalty or delay.
- The Challenger and Columbia disasters both involved engineers with doubts that did not reach decision-makers with enough force.
- Good intentions are not enough; silence must be structurally impossible.

What They Did

- Formalised dissent channels so a minority technical opinion had a route to leadership.
- Used pre-launch reviews that explicitly asked teams to argue why a mission would fail.
- Appointed independent review bodies whose job was to challenge, not to approve.

- Made it legitimate — even expected — to be the person who says 'stop'.

Applying the Fusion — Step by Step

1

Imagine the mission has already failed

Before launch, teams write out the story of how the mission failed. Doing this on paper lets people raise doubts they'd normally keep quiet.

2

Group the failure reasons into weak spots

The failure stories are sorted into clear risk areas, so the team can see where the plan is most likely to break.

3

Give one group the job of attacking the plan

A red team is officially assigned to find the biggest flaw and argue the opposite — and is rewarded for doing so, not punished.

4

Make sure the warnings reach the top

The red team's findings go straight to the decision-maker, unedited, so uncomfortable concerns are not softened by the people who own the project.

The Result

Making dissent a formal role rather than an act of personal courage means the flaw gets found before launch, not in the accident report afterwards.

3. Key Takeaways

- Research answers the question you asked; pre-mortems reveal the questions you didn't.
- Dissent needs a job description, or social gravity silences it.
- Test the loss, not just the preference — removal provokes emotions comparison never shows.
- Use before irreversible launches, rebrands, and anything touching customer identity.