THE PAUSE PROTOCOL

Set the speed. Write the brake.

One page. Fill it before your next launch. Circulate it inside a leadership team, not a filing cabinet.

Change

What are we asking people to start, stop, learn, or carry?

Claimed benefit

What result are we pursuing, and for whom?

Maximum pace

What is the earliest responsible date for the next phase? Responsible, not merely possible.

Readiness requirement

What must be true before we expand?

Three stop conditions

Write each as a threshold, not a category: If X exceeds Y, measured by Z, we pause expansion.

Model: If more than 20% of the team logs over 50 hours for two straight weeks, measured by timesheets plus a manager check-in, we pause expansion.

Capacity

Quality

Trust

Pause owner

Who has explicit authority to stop expansion without first defending the decision to the people invested in the deadline? This cannot be the person whose bonus or board story depends on the date, unless they are bound in advance by a written threshold.

Reporter protection

How can someone raise a pace concern, when will they get a response, and what career penalty or retaliation is explicitly off the table?

Restart criteria

What must change before the team resumes?

> *If a plan has milestones but no stop conditions, it is measuring what it wants from people, not what it refuses to do to them.*