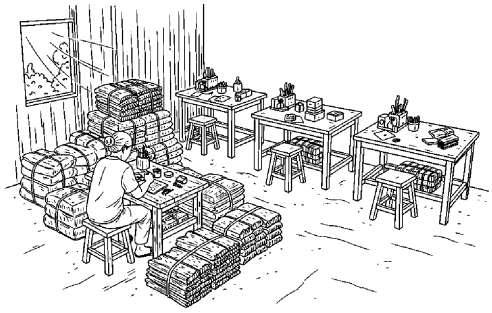
HIGH-VOLUME

WORKSHEET 1 OF 9

Daily Bottleneck Spot-Check

Five minutes, once per shift. Locate where work is piling up right now.



Complementary worksheet for
Operational Efficiency Frameworks
by Ibrahim Anwar

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SECTION 1

What This Is For

A five-minute end-of-shift ritual that answers the one question Theory of Constraints requires you to answer every day: where is work accumulating right now? Most operators feel the constraint intuitively — the desk that is always overloaded, the step where everyone waits — but never record it. Without a record, the same question is answered fresh every morning, and the same constraint goes unaddressed for months.

This worksheet makes the constraint visible in writing. A queue observed once is noise. The same queue flagged three shifts in a row is signal — and signal is the only legitimate basis for deciding where to invest attention, authority, or resources. Use it for any process where throughput matters and delays compound: order processing, loading, manifest preparation, production handoffs.

SECTION 2

Benefits

What you get when you actually run this worksheet on a real situation:

- Converts an instinct ('things feel slow over there') into a dated, named record that can be acted on and measured.
- Identifies the system constraint by accumulation of evidence across days, not by a single manager's impression.
- Forces the owner or supervisor to name a responsible contact for each pileup — eliminating the no-owner gap that is the most common source of unresolved queues.
- Takes five minutes per shift; builds a constraint log that would take hours to reconstruct from memory.
- Creates the daily data feed that tells you whether a constraint has been resolved or simply moved to a different stage.

SECTION 3

Framework To Use

— Five Focusing Steps — Exploit Phase

Before adding capacity, extract maximum output from the constraint that already exists.

1	Identify — scan every stage for queue buildup; record the largest one
▼	
2	Name the owner — who is responsible for clearing this queue today
▼	
3	Exploit — what single action clears half the queue without new resources
▼	
4	Subordinate — confirm upstream stages are not overfeeding the constraint
▼	
5	Repeat tomorrow — same sheet, same five minutes, same question

SECTION 4

How To Use

Follow these steps in order. Each one builds on the previous.

1. At the end of each shift (or once mid-morning for single-shift operations), walk the process from start to finish — physically or by asking one question to each stage lead.
2. Record the time in column one. Write the name of each stage or handoff point you check in column two.
3. In column three, count or estimate the queue: how many units, jobs, or documents are waiting at this stage right now. Use an actual count, not 'a lot' or 'a few.'
4. In column four, write what the stage is waiting for — a decision, a signature, a preceding output, a vehicle, information from another department. One phrase is enough.
5. In column five, write the job title (not name) of the person who can unblock this stage. If you cannot name a person, write 'no owner' — that gap is itself a finding.
6. After completing all rows, circle the row with the largest queue count. That is today's constraint candidate.
7. Before filing the sheet, write one action at the bottom: what will be done about the largest queue before the next check, and who is doing it.
8. File the sheet in a dated folder. After three consecutive days, pull the last three sheets and compare: which stage appears in the largest-queue circle all three days? That is the structural constraint.

SECTION 5

Example Use

A regional distribution company runs 8 delivery routes. The operations supervisor does a daily spot-check after loading is complete. This week she notices that route 3's manifest is consistently the last to be ready, holding three drivers idle for 20–40 minutes each morning.

Monday: the supervisor completes the sheet at 5:50 AM. Route 3 manifest shows a queue of 3 drivers waiting. Column four says "dispatcher has not confirmed route 3 schedule change." Column five: dispatcher — no backup named. She writes the action: "confirm route 3 schedule by 5:30 AM, dispatcher responsible." Cost: zero.

Tuesday: same queue, same stage. Dispatcher confirmed the schedule but the manifest template was not updated to reflect the new stop sequence. Two drivers left without the correct order. Rework: one redelivery, $18 extra fuel, 45 minutes lost.

Wednesday: third consecutive day. The supervisor pulls the three sheets. Route 3 manifest appears in the largest-queue circle all three days. The root cause is now clear: the manifest template is managed by the office team, updated after 8 AM, but drivers need it by 5:30 AM. The fix is a template lock-in at 10 PM the night before, owned by the dispatcher. Implemented Thursday. By Friday, the route 3 queue is gone from the sheet.

Total elapsed time from first observation to fix: four days. Total cost: the $18 redelivery on Tuesday. Without the daily sheet, the queue would have been noticed anecdotally, discussed in a weekly meeting, and still unresolved at month-end.

SECTION 6

The Worksheet

Tear this out, copy it onto a fresh sheet, or fill it in directly.

Daily Bottleneck Spot-Check

Five minutes, once per shift. Locate where work is piling up right now.

TIME	PROCESS STAGE BEING CHECKED	QUEUE SIZE (UNITS/JOBS)	WAITING FOR WHAT?	OWNER TO CONTACT

SECTION 6 (CONTINUED)

Reflection Prompts

After filling in the worksheet on the previous page, work through these.

1. Which row has the largest queue? Is that the same stage that had the largest queue yesterday? If the same stage appears three days running, it is the structural constraint — not a one-day anomaly. Write its name at the bottom of this sheet and treat it as the current constraint focus.

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2. What is the single fastest action that would reduce that queue by half before end of shift — a delegation, a decision, or a resource move? Write it and assign it to a specific job title within 10 minutes of completing this sheet.

SECTION 7

Tips and Traps

TIPS

- Do the check at the same time every day. Consistency of timing makes trends visible; a check at 6 AM one day and 11 AM the next measures different states and produces noise.
- Count actual units in the queue, not impressions. 'About 5' recorded consistently across seven days is useful; 'a lot' is not.
- When a stage has no queue three days running, write zero in that row anyway. The absence of a queue is also information — it confirms the constraint is elsewhere.
- Once a structural constraint is identified (same stage, three or more consecutive days), escalate the exploit step: schedule a 15-minute session with the owner to decide whether the fix is a delegation, a template, or a staffing decision.

TRAPS

- Recording the busiest stage rather than the stage with the largest waiting queue. Busyness and constraint are not the same. A stage with 10 people working furiously but no upstream queue is not the constraint.
- Assigning a person's name rather than a job title in column five. When that person is absent, the owner column is useless. Job title survives personnel changes.
- Skipping the sheet on days when 'everything looks fine.' The constraint does not announce itself — it only becomes visible when recorded consistently including the quiet days.
- Taking the action written at the bottom of the sheet and not verifying whether it was completed before tomorrow's check. An unverified action is the same as no action.

SECTION 8

Appendixes

Appendix A — Three-Day Constraint Confirmation Rule

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Day 1 largest queue  : observation (noise possible)
Day 2 same stage     : pattern forming (investigate root cause)
Day 3 same stage     : confirmed structural constraint (escalate to exploit step)

Exploit actions in order of cost:
  1. Delegation — transfer decision authority to a team member (cost: zero)
  2. Template / SOP — standardize the step so it runs without human judgment (cost: near zero)
  3. Schedule change — move the step earlier in the workflow (cost: coordination only)
  4. Staffing adjustment — add capacity to the constraint stage (cost: time and money)

Never jump to step 4 before steps 1–3 are exhausted.
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Appendix B — Queue Size Reference

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What counts as a queue for this worksheet:

Physical output waiting : boxes, pallets, units staged but not moved
Documents waiting       : manifests, orders, invoices not yet processed
Jobs in progress        : transactions started but blocked mid-step
People waiting          : staff present but unable to proceed without input

What does NOT count:
  Finished output ready for pickup (that is inventory, not a queue)
  Work scheduled for later in the day (that is capacity planning, not a constraint)
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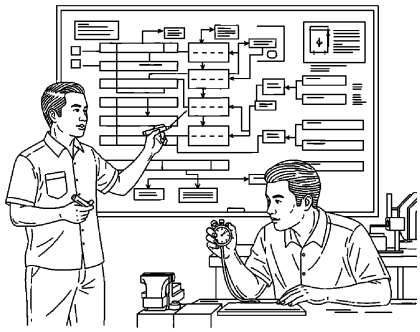

WHERE THIS WORKSHEET COMES FROM

Operational Efficiency Frameworks

Working Harder Is Not the Answer When the System Is Broken

by Ibrahim Anwar

This worksheet is one of nine in the *Operational Efficiency Frameworks* companion worksheet pack. The full pack is grouped into three categories: high-volume worksheets you can run weekly, niche-search worksheets for rare but high-value situations, and specific-case worksheets that walk you through a single concrete scenario.

Every framework, decision filter, and figure used in these worksheets is drawn from the chapters of the source book. The book sets the diagnosis, the worksheets give you the form to act on it.

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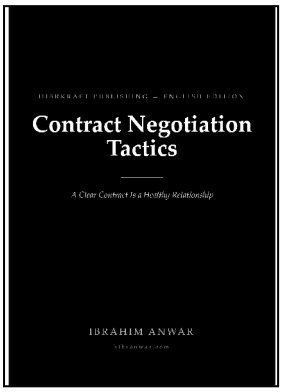

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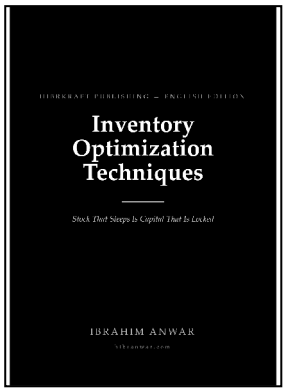

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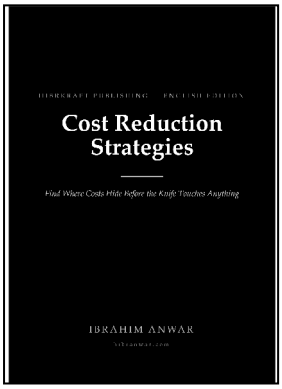

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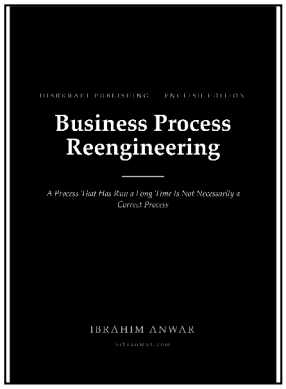

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