Systemic interrupts: a field analysis

Cross-program patterns from 20 weeks of refresh, pull-in and deep-dive recordings across a four-program NPI portfolio

42 recordings analyzed	**21h 33m** captured meeting time	**3** programs with verbatim evidence	**0 min** substantive Program D refresh capture

Seven systemic interrupts

Systemic interrupts are cross-program patterns - each one repeats across projects, so a single fix accelerates the whole portfolio. They are where the biggest leverage in project acceleration sits. The four with the largest schedule exposure are below; interrupts 5-7 are evidenced on p2.

- **Interrupt 1 - one tooling item is throttling two programs.** The ejector-pin tooling at the packaging supplier appears as the named critical-path driver in six meetings across Program B and Program C, from the Jun 12 Program B refresh to the Aug 13 Program C refresh, and drives the Program B 100k slip to January named in the Aug 6 deep dive. It is being managed program-by-program; no cross-program owner or cost-of-delay case has been put against it.
- **Interrupt 2 - escalation stalls at the supplier boundary.** Inside the company, PMs act at Freedom Levels 1-2. At OSAT/supplier interfaces the pattern breaks: a supplier lot-split expedite sat as an open action "for the past two weeks" (Program A, Jun 4); the ejector-pin answer on Aug 13 was the yield lead personally flying to the supplier's factory. Individuals are carrying the urgency the cost-of-delay mechanism was built to carry. The stall has an internal face too: decisions parked on absent decision-makers - a qual start waiting on an absent quality owner, a test-accuracy fix waiting on a sister-team result.
- **Interrupt 3 - the pull-in mindset lives in one program.** Verbatim evidence: Program A under PM A proposes pull-in moves fluently (7 in one 31-min meeting) and decomposes gap improvements honestly. Program C under PM C records slips diligently but proposed zero pull-ins in 50 minutes, and twice framed added padding as prudence. The refresh mechanics transferred without the assume-acceleration mindset.
- **Interrupt 4 - the facilitation gap repeats at every review tier.** The Aug 14 leadership reflection found presenters reverting to slide decks, unable to answer from the live schedule, and not leading with critical path - the same facilitation gaps visible in the refresh recordings, now surfaced at Product Boss level. Three of four program deep dives also failed to record, so this deck is the de facto record. Leadership left the session with countermeasures already moving (see p5).

Evidence base

Tier A - full verbatim transcripts: Program B Apr 1 (PM B), Program A Jun 4 (PM A), Program C Aug 13 (PM C) - one per captured program, chosen to span early/mature/latest practice. Tier B - meeting summaries plus complete action-item lists for all 42 recordings, including three found under Program D's earlier program name and the seven-session Program A coaching-feedback series (Apr 6 - May 21). Tier C - the portfolio milestone workbook: 314 cause-of-change log rows mined across 33 milestone tabs, plus the weekly dashboard build logs. Language-pattern claims rest on Tier A; recurrence and facilitation claims on A+B, corroborated against the workbook's written cause record. No Program D refresh has ever been captured; a 58-min schedule-coaching session survives from its earlier phase.

Recurring blockers

Named critical-path drivers by program · count = meetings in which the blocker is an explicit agenda or cause-of-change item

Blocker	Program A	Program B	Program C	Program D	Pattern
Ejector-pin tooling (the packaging supplier)	-	2	4	-	Single supplier tooling item gates two programs; managed twice in parallel
OSAT lot handling / SOD slips (the packaging supplier, ACSL, a supplier, a	5	4	3	-	Every WS/sample slip traces to a supplier date; expedites stay open for weeks
Inductor supply (zero-yield lots; source swaps)	-	5	1	-	Program B carried it Apr-Jun; resurfaced on Program C via a shared-source evaluation
Test hardware (sockets, handler kits, probe cards)	1	5	1	-	Program B Apr-Jun constant; unit screening repeatedly on hand-test fallback
Late design churn (hybrid redesign, bar-via changes, RDS-on)	1	3	3	-	Program B "pretending hybrid does not exist" Apr 1; RDS-on = 100-day driver by Aug 6

What the recurrence says

- **The slips are external.** Across all three captured programs the recorded causes of change are supplier dates, tooling and processing holds; internal task slippage barely appears in the logs. The leverage sits at the supplier interface - expedites, tie-outs, take-or-pay commitments. Pushing the teams harder gains little, because their own work is not what slips.

- **The same blockers migrate between programs with the shared supply chain.** Ejector pins and shared-source inductor inductors moved from Program B's agenda to Program C's as flows converged on the same OSATs. Nothing in the refresh structure currently catches a blocker the second program inherits - each PM rediscovers it.

Systemic interrupts 5-7

- **Interrupt 5 - shared resources are allocated bilaterally, with no portfolio arbitration.** Wafers, fab slots, OSAT queues and the same few specialists are split between programs ad hoc, inside single-program meetings: Program B splitting six wafers between two suppliers on the fly, with one fab "going to get eaten up by other products" deciding qual priority (Apr 8); Program C actioned to "coordinate with the supply lead to split the shared driver wafers between Program C and Program B" (Aug 6); the Program B deep dive seeking an early risk start on Program A wafers. Each is one program negotiating against another with nobody holding the portfolio view - the ejector-pin gap, repeated for materials and people. Leadership's "one person, ten responsibilities" is the same interrupt at the org level.

- **Interrupt 6 - administrative latency sits on the critical path, unexpedited.** Small clerical steps repeatedly gate hardware across programs: an export approval delayed because the approver was out of office (Program B, Apr 8); a mask-tooling PO that would "sit for like a month" without a same-week release; a handler kit in customs with no ETA (May 13); Program C EBR batches queued behind travel. Individually trivial, collectively a recurring critical-path tax - the fix is a standing fast lane for admin items on any critical path.

- **Interrupt 7 - silent moves make the written record unexplainable portfolio-wide.** Program D - the one program with no captured meetings - has the portfolio's best cause discipline in the wigglechart workbook (one uncaused move in 28); Program B, with the deepest meeting series, leaves 94% of moves uncaused, including four of 90+ days. The workbook also holds escalations the meetings never surface: a formal 8D requested from a wafer supplier across four Program A entries with no meeting mention. Portfolio-wide the written log runs 134 slips to 59 pull-ins - the 2.3:1 ratio the language pattern on p4 predicts. This is exactly the class of pattern a standing project-data mining pass would catch.

Source: 42 recorded meetings over 20 weeks (1,293 min) across a four-program semiconductor NPI portfolio ·

Escalation behavior

Observed decision patterns mapped to the Freedom Scale · Level 1 = act and report, Level 3 = recommend and wait, Level 5 = wait to be told

Observed pattern	Where seen	Freedom Scale reading
Supplier expedite parked as an open action, re-raised weekly, no decision forced	Program A Jun 4 - the packaging supplier lot split "with them for the past two weeks"; Program C tooling wks 1-3	Stuck at Level 3: recommendation made, nobody converts it to a decision
Physical escalation replaces process escalation	Program C Aug 13 - the yield lead flies to the supplier for the ejector-pin conversation	Heroics compensating for a missing cost-of-delay case
Self-initiated mitigation without asking	Program B Apr 1 - a component lead starts backup-vendor search unprompted; PM A’s drop-ship move Jun 4	Level 1-2: the desired behavior, present at the working level
Decisions made outside the room, surfaced late	Program B Apr 1 - production status confusion; a test program killed offline by leadership	Provenance gap: core team learns decisions second-hand
Escalation only fires at the deep-dive tier	Program B deep dive Aug 6 - RDS-on gets external experts and direct-to-the program GM reporting after 100-day slip	Refresh cadence absorbed the risk for weeks before leadership saw it
Target authority deferred upward and outward	Program C Aug 13 - release dates wait on the platform owner and a customer decision	Reasonable Level 3 - but no interim team target held in the meantime

Reading

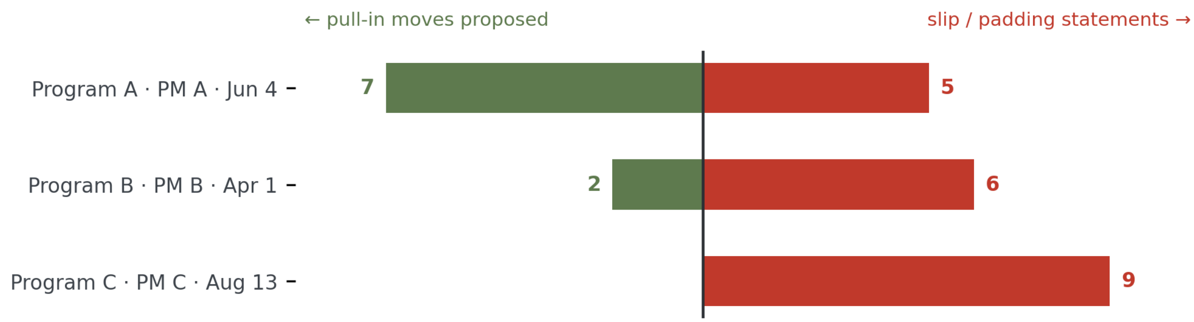
The working level already operates at Levels 1-2 inside the company: engineers start mitigations, PMs record causes, nobody waits to be told. The break is at the company boundary. When the blocker is a supplier, the same people drop to Level 3 and stay there - the action reads "talk to the packaging supplier to expedite" for weeks while the critical path absorbs the delay.

The cost-of-delay model built in February (about $9M/day on Program A) exists precisely to convert that standing recommendation into a decision with a price on it, but it is not cited once in any captured refresh. The escalation log and fortnightly product-boss forum should carry these supplier cases; today they are carried by an engineer with a plane ticket.

The Aug 14 reflection corroborates from above: leadership named "responsibility shifted rather than addressed collectively" and crisis management over foresight - the organizational face of the same Level 3 stall. The room then went one layer deeper: is the stall behavioral or structural? Nobody’s reward system pays them to force the supplier decision, and the executive sponsor committed to an incentives review and separate product-boss / PM sessions on collective responsibility. the program GM supplied the executive version of the cost-of-delay argument the refreshes never cite: at AI-market velocity, unpredictable execution means billion-dollar discrepancies between demand and supply.

Pull-in vs. slip language

Verbatim orientation of each captured PM in one representative meeting · statements coded from full transcripts (Tier A)



What each PM actually says

- **PM A (Program A, Jun 4) - acceleration grammar.** "We pulled in 15 days over the last six weeks" ... "drop ship and help pull in the two days we've lost." Decomposes a green indicator honestly: the 18-day pull-in "is only because of the correction of cycle times," not real acceleration. Tracks second and third critical paths because "the second and third could always make this the first." This is the FTTM refresh voice.
- **PM B (Program B, Apr 1) - collection grammar.** Updates are gathered and dated - "I'll put it at the later date for now" - with one pull-in impulse (solder-volume theory: "to pull it back in, that doesn't sound right to me"). The meeting refreshes the schedule without attacking it. Consistent with the Jun 2 internal read that PM B "spends nearly all his time updating the schedule."
- **PM C (Program C, Aug 13) - documentation grammar.** Causes typed live and honestly - "slip due to ejector pin tooling delay continues" - but zero pull-in proposals in 50 minutes, and padding is added twice with pride: "we have put in a padding for four weeks" and three extra debug weeks "based on leadership feedback." Diligent recording of lateness has substituted for compression of it.

Implication: the wording is a leading indicator. Where the pull-in grammar is absent, the wigglechart trends red weeks later - Program C's three standardized milestones all sit red at the Aug 10 portfolio refresh. Coaching the language ("what would make this start earlier?") is cheaper than coaching the outcome.

PM facilitation vs. the FTTM refresh standard

Scored against the six elements of Step 6 (refresh planning) in the PDT bring-up process · verbatim + summary evidence

FTTM refresh element	PM A · Program A	PM B · Program B (Apr-May)	PM C · Program B+Program C (Jun-Aug)	Program D (no PM capture)
Pre-meeting update report used	Meets	Partial	Meets	n/a
Actions reviewed, open-until-done	Meets	Partial	Meets	n/a
Critical path walked (1st-3rd)	Meets	Partial	Meets	n/a
Pull-in scenarios modeled	Meets	Gap	Gap	n/a
Causes of change recorded	Meets	Partial	Meets	n/a
Wigglechart run and published	Meets	Gap	Partial	n/a

Trajectories

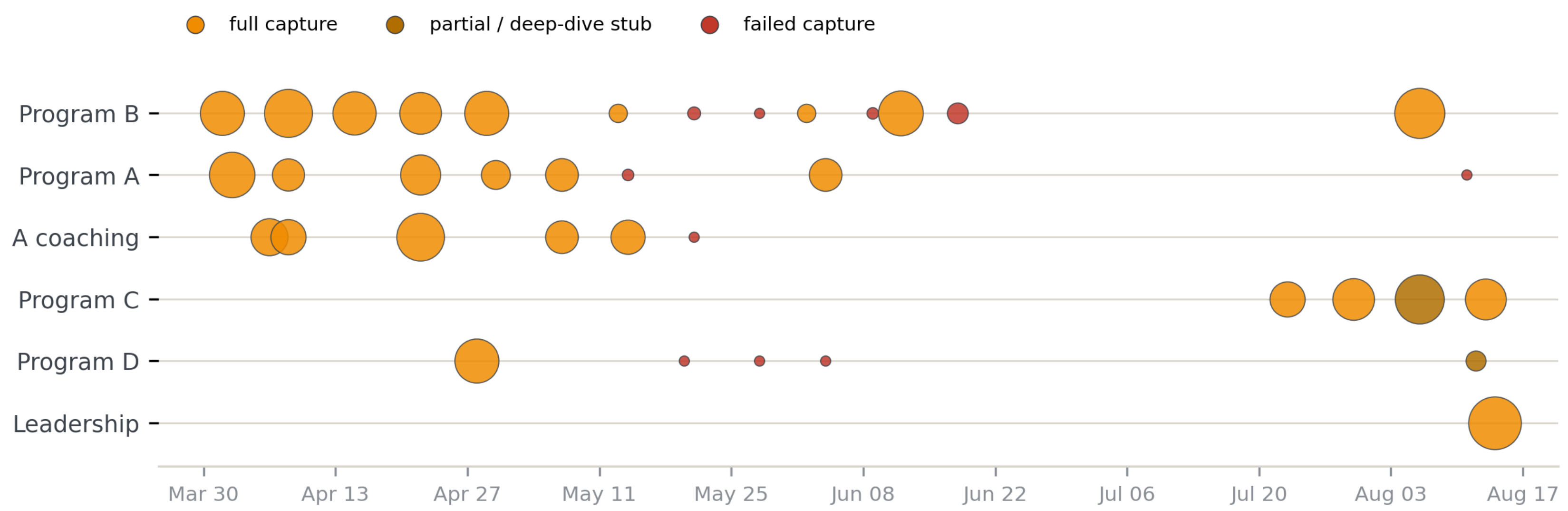
- **PM A is the reference implementation.** The arc is visible in the recordings: mislinked milestones at the Apr 2 scrub, a 3-4 week pull-in praised by Apr 30, nine more days pulled in by May 7, full refresh loop executed unaided by Jun 4. The coaching-feedback series (six sessions, Apr 6 - May 14) shows what produced it: weekly coaching on analyzer discipline, critical-path walking and cause recording. Twelve weeks from adoption to fluency, with dedicated weekly coaching - that is the realistic training curve and cost for the next program. The portfolio is about to lose this: the one PM consistently driving pull-ins is leaving, which makes this arc both the retention argument and the replication recipe.
- **PM B’s gap was structural, and the org has already acted.** A technical leader in a PM seat: live schedule editing consumed the meetings, and the internal Jun 2 read was that he "disempowered his core teams." Program B’s PM duties moved to PM C by June. The lesson is the diagnosis speed - nine weeks of recordings made the pattern undeniable.
- **PM C has the mechanics; the missing layer is compression.** Action discipline, honest cause logging, willing coaching uptake (adopted the open-until-done rule mid-meeting on the coach’s word). What is absent is the pull-in move, and padding is being added under the banner of prudence. One targeted intervention - require one modeled pull-in scenario per refresh - closes most of the remaining distance.
- **Program D is unscoreable from meetings - but un-recorded is not undocumented.** No Program D refresh has survived recording - both Jun 4 attempts, the Aug 12 deep dive and a late-May Program D refresh all died inside two minutes. Yet the workbook shows the portfolio’s best written cause discipline (one uncaused move in 28, vs 94% uncaused on Program B). PM D’s wigglechart log is the Program D evidence base; the missing artifact is facilitation, not documentation.

Leadership response (Aug 14 reflection)

- **Countermeasures are already in motion.** PDT-bosses-in-waiting being stood up; product boss training scheduled (introductory session plus a deeper FastProject session); a September in-person core-team meeting; and a deep-dive cadence redesign taken offline by the coach and the executive sponsor. A gap list without these reads harsher than the room was.
- **The open structural question is resourcing.** One person carrying ten responsibilities was named directly - it ties to the executive sponsor’s Jul 21 gap-analysis grid, and to the incentives review above: ownership expectations cannot outrun capacity. Sourced from the meeting summary; the full 83-min transcript is queued for verbatim confirmation.

Coverage, gaps and recommended actions

What this analysis draws from, what it cannot see, and what to do next



Block	Recordings	Captured	Substantive
Program B refresh series + deep dive	13 + 1	470 min	458 min
Program A refresh / pull-in series	7 + 1 deep dive	236 min	229 min
Program A coaching-feedback series	7	215 min	212 min
Program C refresh series + deep dive	4 + 1	212 min	209 min
Program D / Program D (all attempts)	7	77 min	68 min
Leadership reflection (Aug 14)	1	83 min	83 min

Recommended actions - one fix per systemic interrupt

- **1. Put the ejector-pin tooling on the escalation log** with a cost-of-delay case and a single cross-program owner - the portfolio's most expensive unowned item.
- **2. Add one modeled pull-in scenario as a standing agenda line in every refresh** - the single highest-leverage facilitation change for Program C and Program B.
- **3. Fix Program D meeting capture before the next refresh cycle** - verify the meeting-capture bot on PM D's series; every full-team recording has died inside two minutes since May 28, under both program names.
- **4. Route supplier-boundary blockers older than two weeks to the product-boss forum** automatically - the pattern shows they do not resolve at PM level.
- **5. Stand up a weekly portfolio view of shared resources, critical-path admin items and uncaused moves** - one mined view converts interrupts 5-7 into managed items; the planned Project Notebook is its natural home.