

# Ten questions for the schedule walk-through

Have each PDT leader and their PM present their schedule to you, live in the scheduling tool, walking the first five critical paths. The PM drives the tool; the leader answers the questions. One hour per project, no slides, schedule current as of that morning. The answers matter less than the preparation this forces: leaders will get into their own schedules before they will stand in front of you with one.

## 1. Where are we against the target date, plus or minus?

- State the gap in weeks. Is it on the schedule, or only in your head?  
**Listen for:** a number. "On track" without a number means the gap is hidden.

## 2. Walk me through critical path #1, task by task.

- What is the driving task today, and who owns it?
- What finishes this week, and what starts because of it?  
**Listen for:** whether the leader can narrate the path without the PM rescuing them.

## 3. Now show me critical paths 2 through 5.

- How many days behind the longest path is each one?
- Which becomes #1 the moment you pull in the first?  
**Listen for:** near-critical paths within days of the longest. Pull-in has to target the top three to five, not just the winner.

## 4. Which tasks on these five paths assume everything works the first time?

- Where are the learning cycles, and how many does each hard problem carry?  
**Listen for:** one iteration everywhere. That is a prediction that nothing fails, and it has never come true.

## 5. What are the top three technical problems between here and delivery?

- Rate each one easy, medium, or hard.
- Who is solving them, and is that all they do?  
**Listen for:** hard problems worked part-time by people carrying other jobs.

## 6. Which problems will need more learning cycles than the schedule shows?

- What does the worst case look like, and is a worst-case placeholder in the plan?
- Roughly two cycles for easy, three or four for medium, five or more for hard.  
**Listen for:** open-loop unknowns: "no answer yet" appearing as no task in the plan.

## 7. What are the top risks on these paths, and the mitigation for each?

- What is in the risk register versus only in people's heads?
- What is the trigger that starts the mitigation?  
**Listen for:** mitigations with owners and dates. Intentions are not mitigations.

## 8. What is the schedule trend: slipping or accelerating?

- If slipping: is there time left to recover, and what is the recovery plan?
- If on schedule: what are you pulling in? What are the top three future slips you expect, and what are you doing now to head them off?  
**Listen for:** active pull-in. A flat trend with no pull-ins means drift is being absorbed silently.

## 9. What do you need that you are not getting?

- How many people, which skills, which decisions?
- What can I remove for you today?  
**Listen for:** names and numbers. A vague call for "resources" is the excuse, not the constraint.

## 10. Do you have confidence in the target date, and what would raise it?

- If not: what specifically has to change to increase your confidence?
- What would the schedule look like if you had everything you asked for?  
**Listen for:** whether their confidence matches the gap they showed you in question 1.

**Run it as a cadence, not an event.** Repeat the walk-through monthly with each PDT. By the second round the answers to questions 4, 6, and 7 should be in the schedule, not in the room. When a leader answers every question from their own plan without looking at the PM, the pain has been pulled forward and you are no longer flying without instruments.