

THE FRONT-TO-BACK TRACE CHECKLIST

Five steps for finding exactly where a trade, order, claim or ticket broke

THE RECORD

Anchor ID: _____ Record type (trade / order / claim / ticket): _____



1. TAG IT

Find the one ID that ties every stage together.

Does it map cleanly to the next stage, or can it split (partial fills, split shipments) or merge (batched claims)?



2. ROUTE IT

Map the stages the record passes through, front to back.

Intake, Processing, Validation, Confirmation, Completion — before deciding which system is to blame.



3. ASK AT EACH STOP

What did this stage receive, and what did it send onward?

Most breaks live in the gap between two stages, not inside either one.



4. COMPARE THE DATA

Pull the actual record, not just the status flag.

A green status and a correct outcome are not the same thing.



5. EXPLAIN THE DROP-OFF

Name the exact stage where the story stopped matching.

That's your break point — specific enough for someone to act on today.

MISTAKES THAT STALL A TRACE

- Jumping to "it's a bug" before walking the record stage by stage
- Tracing forward only, missing an upstream break
- Treating one broken record as an isolated case
- Trusting a status flag over the actual record
- Chasing a different ID at each stage instead of one anchor
- Not writing down what you found at each stop

QUESTIONS TO KEEP IN YOUR POCKET

What's the anchor ID here?

What came in vs. went out?

Who owns this stage?

Could it fail silently?

THE BIG IDEA

Don't ask who broke it.

Ask where, in the journey, the story stopped matching.