simplify

Untie the knot



A one-page game for finding what slows your work down. Grab the people who do the work, a pen, and about twenty minutes. Coffee optional.

1 Pick one thing you do every week

Paying a bill. Welcoming a new hire. Updating a customer's details. Small and boring is perfect.

2 Walk it out loud

Say every step the way it really happens, waiting included. Every time the work moves to another person, inbox or system, make a tally mark.

HANDOFFS ____	DAYS FROM START TO DONE ____	TIMES IT RUNS EACH WEEK ____

3 Spot the knots

Tick each one you find. Most teams know these by feel; now they have names.

- ☐ **The Copycat**
  The same info gets typed into two places.
- ☐ **The Spreadsheet Bridge**
  Data leaves one system in a spreadsheet just to get into another.
- ☐ **The Permission Loop**
  A yes everyone expects still waits for a signature, or two.
- ☐ **The Inbox Bottleneck**
  Everything stops until one person checks their email.
- ☐ **The Nudge**
  Part of someone's job is reminding people to do theirs.
- ☐ **The Friday Match-Up**
  Two lists get compared by eye at the end of the week.
- ☐ **The "Just This Once"**
  The exception happens so often it's really the rule.
- ☐ **The Orphan**
  Nobody owns the whole thing from start to finish.

4 Count your ticks

0 to 2: Smooth sailing
Nicely done. Check again when things get busier.

3 to 5: A few tangles
Start with the knot most of the work passes through.

6 to 8: Full-on knot
Good news: that's a lot of easy wins waiting.

5 Pull one thread

Don't fix everything. Fix the knot that the most work runs through, using one of these three moves.

Enter it once
The person who knows it types it, one time, in one place.

Approve in one place
Write down the easy yeses so they happen on their own. People only see the real exceptions.

Every system updates
Other tools read from that one place instead of copies and exports.

Then come back in 30 days and fill in the three boxes from step 2 again. Fewer handoffs and fewer days means the knot is coming loose.