The Intangibles

The benefits that do not appear in a timesheet, and how to check for them yourself.

About this guide

Some of what a shared structure changes is hard to put a number on: confidence, clarity, friction, calm. This guide names six of those intangible benefits, says which design feature each one comes from, and suggests a simple way to test it in your own team.

These are intended benefits, not measured outcomes. We do not attach figures to them, and you should not either until you have your own evidence.

"Not everything that matters can be counted. It can still be checked."

Six intangibles

1. Confidence in the picture

Where it comes from. One structure that requirements, controls and evidence relate to, so a question about the control environment has one place to be answered from. Gaps show up as gaps instead of being hidden.

How to test it. Ask three people at different levels the same question about one control. Do their answers agree, and can each say where the evidence is?

2. A shared language

Where it comes from. Common tiers, domains and control names used by governance, management and execution. The same word points to the same thing.

How to test it. In your next cross-team meeting, count how often someone stops to ask what a term means or which framework it belongs to.

3. Less friction at the boundaries

Where it comes from. Control dependencies are visible, and each control has a defined owner and place. Hand-offs between teams follow the structure instead of negotiation.

How to test it. List the last few issues that bounced between teams. Would a named owner or a visible dependency have settled them sooner?

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4. Fewer surprises

Where it comes from. Changes in rules or conditions are related to existing controls through mapping and a defined change process, so their effect is seen before it arrives as an urgent request.

How to test it. Review the last unplanned request you received. Could you have seen it coming from the structure, or did it arrive from nowhere?

5. Work visibly tied to its purpose

Where it comes from. Each control sits within a tier and domain, so someone performing a task can see what it supports and who relies on it.

How to test it. Ask a control operator why their task exists and who uses its output. Can they answer without looking it up?

6. Easier onboarding and handover

Where it comes from. A person joining a team learns one structure, not several parallel ones. A handover describes a control in the same terms the next person will meet.

How to test it. Time how long it takes a new joiner to explain how their control connects to the rest. Note where they got stuck.

Using this in practice

Pick one or two intangibles that matter most to your team and run the test before and after a change. A short written note from each level is enough. If the evidence is thin, say so; an honest “not yet visible” is more useful than a claim you cannot support.

Where the intangibles sit among the other benefits

Hours: the effort figures in “Where the Effort Goes” and the Build Your Own Case worksheet.

Role view: what each level can expect, in “What Changes for You”.

Intangibles: this guide. They support the same case but are not added to the numbers.

Count what you can. Check what you can’t.

Related guides: What Changes for You · Where the Effort Goes · Build Your Own Case worksheet. Described benefits are design intentions; results depend on implementation.

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