# Fixing a Broken Feature Pipeline

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### Disclaimer

This scenario breakdown is a fictionalized, illustrative case study created for educational and strategic thinking purposes. While inspired by real-world patterns and organizational challenges, all details—company context, team structure, and suggested approaches—are generalized and do not represent any specific employer, client, or confidential situation.

The content is designed to demonstrate strategic problem-solving, not to prescribe one-size-fits-all solutions. Readers are encouraged to adapt ideas and frameworks to suit their unique organizational needs, capabilities, and compliance contexts.

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### Context: The Situation

A mid-sized software company has a backlog of product features that never seem to reach users effectively. Features are often delayed, misunderstood by users, or deprioritized mid-build. Product-market fit (PMF) is fuzzy, and engineers are demotivated by shifting priorities and unclear requirements. The leadership suspects poor coordination between PM, UX, and engineering is leading to costly misalignment and delivery delays.

The org has strong technical talent and a solid customer base, but the delivery rhythm is off. Features are either built too late or miss the mark entirely. They need to rebuild trust in their feature delivery engine — from discovery to design to deploy.

### Root Problems

- **Disconnected Product Discovery**: PMs gather feedback, but it's not shared with UX/engineering early enough.
- **Overloaded Teams**: Too many WIP items, unclear prioritization, and context switching.
- **Lack of Delivery Feedback Loops**: Post-launch data is sparse or ignored; no iteration mindset.
- **No Shared Definition of Done**: Quality, design, and engineering goals not aligned before build.
- **PMF Blindness**: Building features without clear value validation or experimentation.

**Approach & Framework**

Use the **Feature Flow Reset Model**: **Discover → Align → Execute → Learn**

**🔹 Phase 1: Discover**

- Centralize user research, sales feedback, and usage data.
- Run "Problem Framing" workshops before any feature kick-off.
- Use product analytics to identify usage drop-offs and friction points.

**🔹 Phase 2: Align**

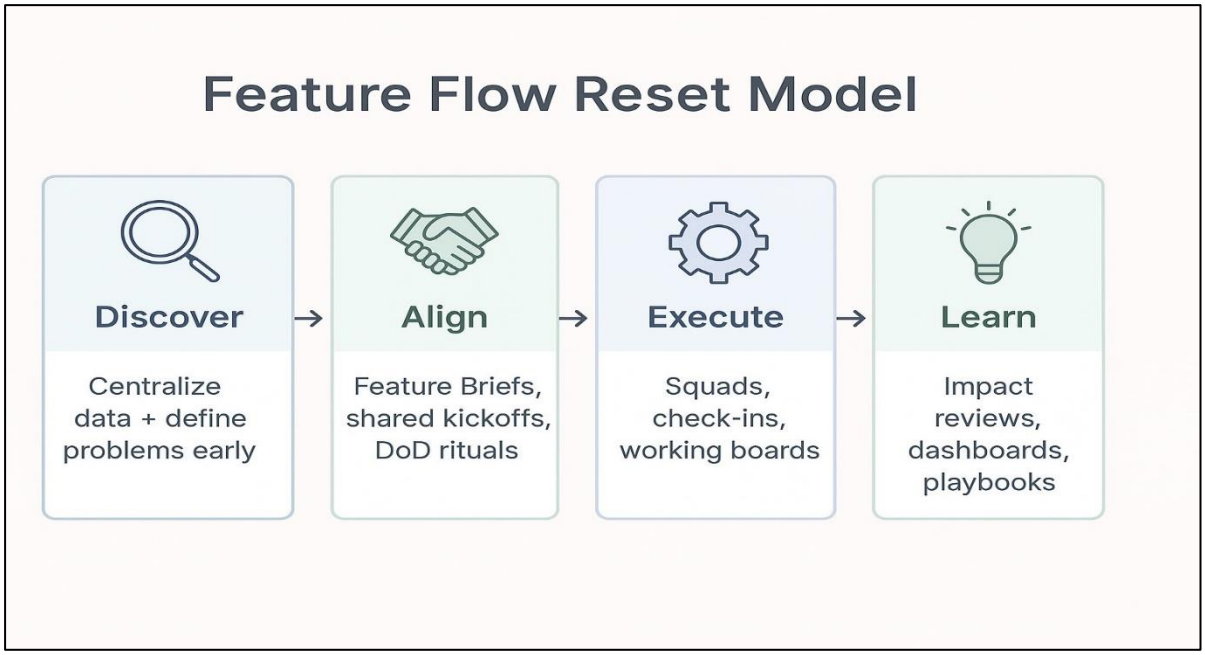
- Co-create Feature Briefs (PM + UX + Tech) with goals, risks, and success metrics.
- Introduce a shared Design-Dev kick-off ritual.
- Define a shared Definition of Done (DoD) including PMF validation.

**🔹 Phase 3: Execute**

- Use smaller work slices and 2-week checkpoints.
- Appoint a Feature Captain per major release.
- Use a real-time feature board with status, owners, and blockers.

**🔹 Phase 4: Learn**

- Embed analytics into each release by default.
- Run post-launch "Impact Reviews" with cross-functional teams.
- Publish learnings in internal playbooks or newsletters.



**30-60-90 Day Execution Plan (The Core Blueprint)**

**Days 0–30: DISCOVER + ALIGN**

**Goal**: Build strong foundations in discovery and alignment.

- Run product storytelling workshops — teach teams how to connect features to user pain.
- Standardize the Feature Brief template.
- Audit the last 5 features shipped — what worked, what didn't, what metrics were captured?
- Introduce a Design + Dev kick-off ceremony for all major features.
- Tools: Miro for mapping, Product board, Full Story/Amplitude for data, Figma + Jira integration
- Deliverables: 3 updated Feature Briefs, new shared DoD, 1 aligned product trio pilot

**Days 31–60: EXECUTE**

**Goal**: Pilot the new rituals with selected features.

- Form 2 squads to test the new feature pipeline
- Track features using a shared board (Notion, Jira, or Linear)
- Add A/B testing plans or user validation steps into DoD
- Schedule mid-cycle check-ins with customer-facing teams
- Deliverables: 2 new features launched using full brief-to-feedback loop, squad retros completed

**Days 61–90: LEARN + SCALE**

**Goal**: Systematize feedback and continuous improvement.

- Run 3 "Impact Reviews" with metrics and anecdotes
- Publish a Feature Delivery Playbook v1
- Start visualizing Feature Success Scorecard (adoption, engagement, retention impact)
- Celebrate wins and publish shoutouts to teams that completed the loop
- Deliverables: 1 playbook, updated rituals calendar, adoption dashboard

**Success Metrics**

- % of features shipped with full briefs and shared DoD
- Feature engagement rate post-release (vs. previous avg)
- % of squads adopting new rituals (kick-off, reviews, etc.)
- No. of features tested with users before full rollout

**Risks & Trade-Offs**

| Risk | Mitigation |
|---|---|
| Resistance to process change | Start with pilots, show success quickly |
| PMs/Devs too busy for new rituals | Keep alignment tools lightweight, async-friendly |
| Misuse of metrics | Align on which metrics matter (impact over vanity) |
| UX/PM misalignment resurfaces | Rotate pairing partners across features to foster empathy |

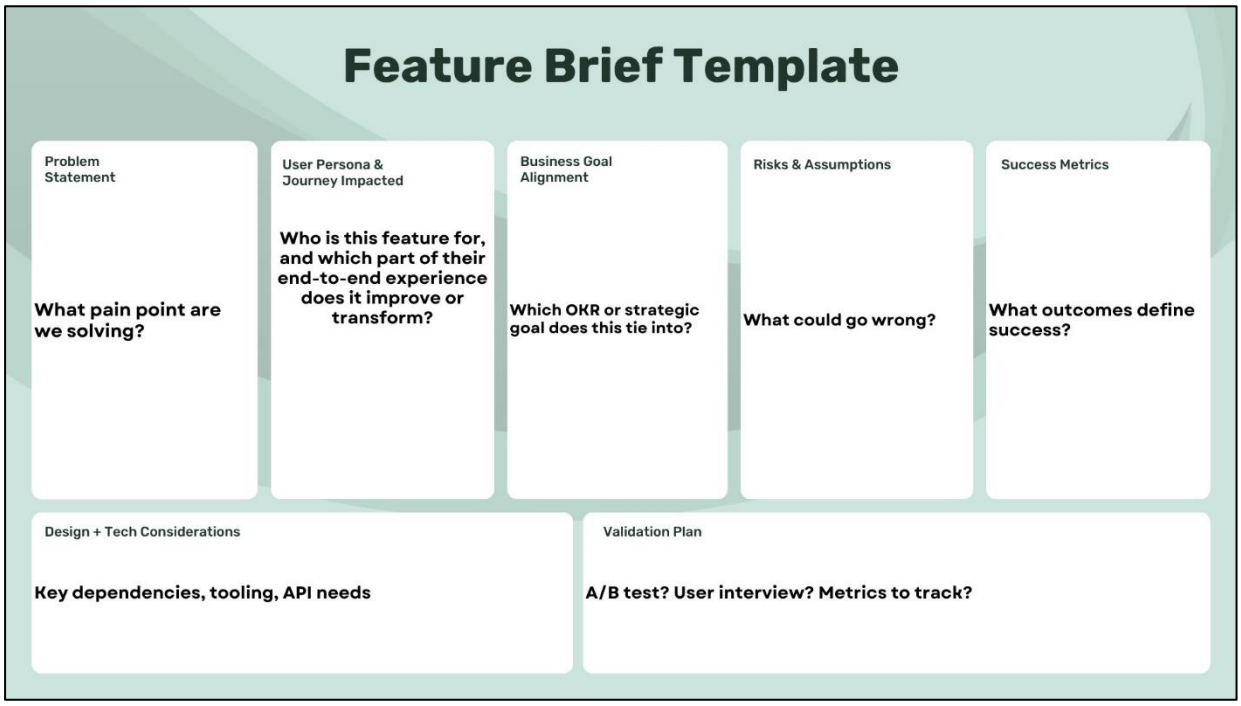
**Try This (Interactive Simulation)**

**Scenario Challenge:** You're asked to audit your current feature delivery pipeline.

1. Choose 3 recent features. Map their timeline: discovery → alignment → build → launch → learn.
2. Identify where misalignments or delays happened.
3. Propose 2 changes to reduce delivery waste and improve success rate.

**Bonus Tools:**

- Feature Brief Template




- **Impact Review Checklist**

  Use this after every major feature launch to assess real-world outcomes, team feedback, and improvement opportunities.

  **1. Feature Overview**

  - Feature Name
  - Launch Date
  - Squad / Team Owners
  - Intended User Persona(s)
  - Target Metric(s) (e.g., engagement, retention, revenue lift)

**2. Adoption & Engagement**

- % of users who accessed or used the feature in first 7 / 30 days
- Engagement level vs. forecast (clicks, completion, revisit rate, etc.)
- Drop-off or confusion points (from analytics or user feedback)
- Channel visibility (Was it discoverable via onboarding, menus, or announcements?)

**3. User Feedback**

- Qualitative quotes from users or support tickets
- Usability issues reported (UX bugs, confusion)
- Internal feedback from CS / Sales / Support teams
- Net Promoter Score (if applicable) or post-launch sentiment

**4. Experimentation & Validation**

- A/B test or control group results
- Did the feature move the needle on key metrics?
- Any unexpected side effects or trade-offs?
- Was the PMF hypothesis validated or challenged?

**5. Technical & Operational Review**

- Production stability (errors, load, latency)
- Integration friction with other systems or modules
- Code maintainability score (from developers or tool reports)
- Known bugs or technical debt added

**6. Internal Learning & Playbook Updates**

- Did the squad publish a short summary or case study internally?
- Are changes needed in onboarding docs or internal FAQs?
- What will we do differently for the next similar feature?
- Were any rituals (kick-off, DoD, impact review) skipped or rushed?

**7. Outcome & Next Steps**

- Should this feature be scaled, iterated, or sunset?
- Follow-up tickets or backlog items created.
- Ownership assigned for ongoing support or optimization.
- One-line lesson summary: *“What we learned from this feature was…”*

**Tips for Use:**

- Run this review 2–4 weeks after launch.
- Invite PM, UX, Tech, and customer-facing reps.
- Document in Notion/Confluence and tag learnings for reuse.

**Thank you**

**Happy Learning!**