

The Shift Handover Playbook

How processing sites lose knowledge every swing, and what the good ones do about it.

Written by tradespeople with over ten years in Western Australian gold processing.

PART ONE

What actually walks out the gate

Every processing site runs on two kinds of knowledge. The first kind lives in systems: the CMMS, the work orders, the drawings, the isolation procedures. The second kind lives in people: why that pump always cavitates after a restart, which bearing runs hot but is fine, what night shift tried before they landed on the fix that worked.

The first kind is audited, backed up and reported on. The second kind decides whether your next twelve hours go well, and on most sites it is held together by a whiteboard, a notebook and a five minute conversation.

That second kind of knowledge leaves the site constantly. It leaves at every handover that gets cut short. It leaves at the end of every swing. It leaves for good every time an experienced hand retires, transfers or walks across the road for an extra ten dollars an hour.

None of this shows up as a line item. It shows up as repeat faults, longer diagnoses, new starters taking a year to become useful, and supervisors reconstructing the week from memory every Friday.

The sites that manage it well are not smarter. They just treat shift knowledge as a record instead of a conversation.

PART TWO

The five places knowledge leaks

- **The crib room handover.** Two crews, twelve hours apart, five minutes of overlap. Whatever does not get said in that window is gone. If the incoming super is grabbed by someone on the way in, the window is two minutes.
- **The back pocket notebook.** Often the best maintenance record on site, and completely invisible to everyone but its owner. It leaves through the gate every swing and never comes back when they do not.
- **The whiteboard.** Good for right now, useless for last month. The moment it is wiped, the record of that week never existed.
- **The end of swing turnover.** An eight day gap between one crew and the same crew again. The cross shift carries the thread, until they are on leave too.
- **The departure.** When twenty years of experience resigns, the standard exit process captures their site access card and their PPE. The twenty years goes with them.

Most sites have all five leaks running at once. Fixing the handover alone helps, but the notebook and the departure are where the expensive losses happen, because those are the ones you cannot reconstruct.

| *Nothing was deleted. Everything was lost.*

PART THREE

What it costs, in language your GM understands

Knowledge loss hides inside numbers that already exist on site. You do not need a study, you need to look at four things you already measure.

Repeat faults

Pull twelve months of downtime data for one conveyor or one mill circuit and count how many failures are the same failure. Every repeat where the original fix was known but not recorded is a knowledge loss, not a maintenance problem. On fixed plant, repeat and rework failures routinely sit among the top downtime contributors.

Diagnosis time

The second occurrence of a fault should be faster to solve than the first. If it is not, the first solution never made it into a record anyone can find. Hours of trending, isolating and head scratching, spent re-earning knowledge the site already paid for once.

Time to competence

Ask how long a new fitter takes to be genuinely useful on your plant. The honest answer is usually a year or more, and most of that year is spent absorbing unwritten knowledge one anecdote at a time. A written shift record cuts that curve because the context is readable instead of oral.

Supervisor admin

A supervisor reconstructing the week each Friday from memory, texts and the whiteboard spends one to three hours producing a report that is thinner than what actually happened. Multiply by every supervisor, every week, every department. That is the visible cost. The invisible cost is everything that did not make the report because nobody could remember it.

PART FOUR

Why the five minute handover fails

It is not because people are lazy. It fails structurally, for four reasons.

- **It happens at the worst possible moment.** End of a twelve hour shift, bus waiting, brain done. Recall is at its lowest exactly when the process depends on it.
- **It is unprompted.** No structure means each super hands over whatever is front of mind, which is usually the last four hours, not the important six from this morning.
- **It is oral.** Spoken handover degrades like a game of telephone. By the time it reaches the crew, detail is gone and emphasis has shifted.
- **It has no memory.** Even a perfect verbal handover only covers one boundary. Nothing accumulates. The Tuesday problem is forgotten by Thursday, and invisible to the crew coming back next swing.

The fix is not a longer meeting. The fix is moving the record backwards in time, from the end of shift to during the shift, and forwards in permanence, from spoken to written.

PART FIVE

Seven habits of sites that keep what they know

None of these require software. All of them get easier with it, but the discipline comes first and it costs nothing.

- 1 Log during, not after.** The record gets written when the event happens, in the moment or at crib, not reconstructed at 5:45pm. Two sentences at 10am beat a paragraph of guesswork at knock off.
- 2 Plain language, no ceremony.** If logging requires formal writing, codes or a desktop terminal, crews will not do it. The standard is: would the cross shift understand this in one read.
- 3 Capture the why, not just the what.** 'Changed CV02 bend pulley bearing' is a work order. 'Failed because the auto luber was set to the wrong output, check the others' is knowledge. The second sentence is the one that prevents the repeat.
- 4 One record, not five.** Notebook, whiteboard, text thread, email, verbal. Pick one home for shift knowledge and make everything else point to it. Fragmented records are barely better than none.
- 5 Handover reads the record, it does not replace it.** The five minutes becomes a walkthrough of what is already written, plus questions. Nothing new should be born verbally at the boundary.
- 6 Reports built from records, not memory.** If the weekly report is assembled from the daily record, Friday becomes an edit, not an archaeology dig, and nothing important is lost to recall.
- 7 Make the record outlive the person.** The test of your system is simple: if your best operator resigned tomorrow, how much of what they know would still be on site next month. If the answer is uncomfortable, that is the gap.

PART SIX

A handover standard you can run next swing

Print this, take it to your next pre start, and agree on it as a crew. It works on paper, a shared document or purpose built software. The medium matters less than the habit.

THE STANDARD · AGREED AS A CREW

- ☐ Every shift produces a written log, started during the shift, not at the end.
- ☐ Each entry answers three things: what happened, why it happened or what we think, what the next crew needs to do or watch.
- ☐ Anything unresolved is explicitly flagged as carried over, and stays flagged until closed, however many shifts that takes.
- ☐ The incoming supervisor reads the log before the verbal handover, so the conversation is questions, not narration.
- ☐ Safety items, isolations and abnormal plant states lead the log, every time, no exceptions.
- ☐ The weekly report is assembled from the daily logs. If something matters enough for the report, it was logged the day it happened.
- ☐ Once a swing, the crew spends five minutes reviewing carried over items older than a week. Old flags either get a plan or get closed.

PART SEVEN

Where software fits, and where it does not

Everything in this playbook works with a notebook and discipline. The honest question is whether it keeps working under pressure, at 3am, in week two of a bad run, when the discipline is the first thing to go.

That is the actual case for purpose built software. Not features, but friction. A system crews will use has to be faster than the whiteboard, live on the phone already in their pocket, and give something back immediately, not just to management at month end.

What to demand from any tool you look at:

- Logging takes under a minute per entry, in plain language, on any device.
- Daily entries build the weekly report automatically, so nobody writes anything twice.
- Carried over items persist across shifts and swings without anyone re-entering them.
- The record is searchable, so the fix from March is findable in September.
- Data lives in Australia, access is controlled per site and per department, and there is a real audit trail. Your IT department will ask, so ask first.

If a tool cannot clear those five bars, the notebook is genuinely better, because at least the notebook gets used.

We built ShiftIntel to clear them. It came out of ten years on the tools and in supervision in WA gold processing, and it is live on site now, running across mechanical, electrical and operations crews. Crews log the shift as it happens, the weekly report builds itself, and what the crew knows stays with the site.

If you want to see it running against your kind of plant, a walkthrough takes fifteen minutes and starts inside the product, not a slide deck. Details on the back page.

Keep what your crews know.

ShiftIntel is shift handover and reporting software built for mining maintenance and operations teams. Crews log the shift as it happens, in plain language, on any device. Daily entries build the weekly report automatically.

Live now in WA gold processing. Data hosted in Australia.

Book a 15 minute walkthrough — or run it on your own site for 30 days

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