



HUMAN-POWERED ENGINEERING

Practical content for engineering leaders

HPE FIELD HANDOUT

No-Façade Status Questions

A practical set of questions that turns “we should be fine” into facts. Use this to prevent fake green, surface risks early, and keep stakeholders aligned — without turning status into theater.

How to use this handout: Don’t run a full interrogation. Use it as a management cadence. In regular check-ins (daily standups, weekly status calls, milestone reviews), ask **one question from each group**.

If the status is truly green, it should survive a few evidence-based questions without getting vague. If it can’t — that’s useful signal. You just got closer to reality before reality got closer to you.

Tip: When the answer is “it’s fine,” immediately ask for an artifact (PR/build/deploy link) and a verification step. This eliminates unintentional green-washing and reduces late surprises.

Evidence What’s real and inspectable?

1. **What can I click and see right now?** (PR, commit, build link, environment URL, demo endpoint, screenshot)
2. **What changed since the last update?** (one concrete delta, not “progress was made”)

Verification What has been proven?

1. **What has been verified already — and how?** (tests, QA, review, perf, security)
2. **What’s the next verification step — and when will it happen?**

Definition of Done What “done” actually means here

1. **What’s left to be “Done”** under our DoD / acceptance criteria?
2. **Which part of what’s left is the riskiest — and why?**

Dependencies Who must confirm?

1. **Who has to say “yes” for this to be Done — and have they said it?**
2. **What external dependency could block us this week?** What’s our plan if it does?

Forecast & Triggers When does green become amber?

1. **If we had to call it now:** what’s the probability we finish by date X — and what would change that number?
2. **What would make you flip this to amber — and when will we know?** (explicit trigger + time)

Next Action What de-risks the most?

1. **What’s the single next action that de-risks this the most?** Who owns it, by when?
2. **If we’re wrong and this slips, what’s the least-bad option?** (scope trade, sequencing change, staffing help, escalation path)

Why this works: These questions replace “status as comfort” with “status as control.” They surface risks while they’re still cheap — before you end up managing a crisis instead of a plan.