NANOCOEUR CONSULTING

The Delta Review

A self- and team-interview guide for surfacing real learning, not failure stories.

Most reviews ask the wrong question. "What went wrong?" and "Tell me about a failure" assume failure is a single collapse with a clear villain. Real work rarely fails that way. It loses a little time in many places, corrects most of it in flight, and arrives at a result that hides the messy path. This guide finds the **delta**: the distance between what happened and the ideal, and what to do with it on the next lap.

> **The model.** In racing, the "optimum lap" is a construct nobody actually drives. It is stitched from your best corners across many laps. Every real lap is a percentage of that ideal. No driver calls a 99.6% lap a failure. They ask: where did I leave time on the table, and how do I know? Use these pages to ask the same of any project, decision, or candidate.

Run it solo after a project or decision, to convert a vague "it went fine" into specific, reusable learning.

Run it in a 1:1 as a blameless retrospective. Lead with the Prime Directive: assume everyone did the best they could with what they knew.

Run it in an interview using the Interviewer's Cut on the last page. Silence is not a red flag. Inability to describe a single delta or fix is.

1. Set the lap

Define the project or decision, and what "optimum" would have looked like. You cannot measure a delta without a reference line.

The project / decision under review:

What did "the perfect lap" look like here? (the ideal outcome, timeline, or call)

2. Find the deltas

Where did you leave time on the table, and how do you know? Be specific and distributed. Many small losses, not one catastrophe.

Where the result fell short of optimum, and the evidence:

3. The in-flight fixes

The micro-failures you caught and corrected before they mattered. These are the ones your memory files as "Tuesday." Recover them on purpose.

What slipped, and how you caught and corrected it mid-flight:

4. The discrete check

Separate from the small stuff: was there an actual collapse, a DNF, a thing that genuinely died? Often the answer is no, and that is fine.

Any hard failure (and was it one event or many causes converging)?

5. Attribution honesty

In a multi-variable program, "I failed" is usually inaccurate. Separate what was the system from what was actually yours to change.

What was systemic / outside your control:

What was genuinely yours to own:

6. The next lap

The only output that compounds. What would you do differently, stated concretely enough that someone else could act on it?

Changes for the next run:

The Interviewer's Cut

Swap the collapse questions for delta questions. Then listen for judgment, not polish.

Ask these instead of "tell me about a failure":

- Where did you leave time on the table, and how did you know it was there?
- What did you catch and fix mid-flight, before it became a problem?
- On the next lap, what would you do differently, and what was actually yours to change?

Strong signals

- Names a specific delta with evidence, not a vague "could've been better."
- Describes a fix or tradeoff in concrete terms.
- Separates the system from their own call honestly.
- Has a real "next lap" change, stated so others could act on it.

Weak signals

- Cannot name a single delta or in-flight fix, even when prompted.
- Only has highlight-reel wins with a perfectly smooth path.
- Blames entirely outward, or claims a clearly systemic failure as a solo heroics story.
- No forward change. Nothing learned, nothing carried.

Note: a moment of silence on "describe a failure" is a category mismatch, not a deficiency. Re-ask as a delta question before drawing any conclusion.