

HAPI CASE STUDIES

How Agency Is Preserved, Captured, Stripped, and Restored Across Human Systems

A Human Agency Preservation Infrastructure Working Thesis Paper

Author: Michael Bower

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Core thesis: Across human systems, agency is either preserved, captured, stripped, simulated, or restored. HAPI becomes practical when the same pattern can be recognized across AI, healthcare, work, religion, education, public systems, addiction recovery, family systems, and personal AI companions.

Abstract

This paper applies Human Agency Preservation Infrastructure (HAPI) to a set of cross-domain case studies. The purpose is to demonstrate that HAPI is not merely an abstract theory of agency, nor only a governance framework for agentic AI. It is a diagnostic and restorative lens for human systems. The same structural pattern appears across institutions: people may be present in a system while their meaningful participation, refusal, judgment, memory, authority, and capacity are progressively removed. HAPI names this pattern as agency loss. It also distinguishes agency restoration from mere access, compliance, service delivery, or symbolic participation.

The case studies are synthetic but realistic. They are not accusations against specific organizations. Each case identifies a setting, an agency-loss pattern, a HAPI reading, a restoration path, and a governance output. The cases cover AI agent deployment, healthcare complexity, workplace metric capture, religious false gates, education as compliance production, public bureaucracy, addiction recovery, family systems, AI companions, and a positive redesign case. Together they show that HAPI can function as an institutional diagnostic method, a restoration framework, and a governance infrastructure model.

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1. Introduction

HAPI begins from a simple question: is human agency being preserved, captured, stripped, simulated, or restored? This question applies to AI systems, but it also applies to hospitals, schools, workplaces, churches, public agencies, families, recovery programs, and digital companions. In each domain, the visible form of participation can remain while the underlying function of agency is weakened.

A person can be asked to click approve without having enough context to refuse. A patient can be told they have choices while being too overwhelmed to understand them. A worker can be measured so tightly that judgment becomes risky. A student can be trained to comply without learning how to choose. A believer can be shepherded in a way that becomes dependency on institutional permission. A citizen can technically have rights while being trapped in procedural opacity. These are not separate problems. They are variations of agency loss.

This paper translates the HAPI foundation into applied cases. The aim is not to prove every case empirically. The aim is to show that HAPI has cross-domain diagnostic power: it can identify where human participation is real, where it has become theatrical, and where restoration requires more than policy language.

2. Methodology and Use of Synthetic Case Studies

The case studies in this paper are synthetic. They are constructed from recurring patterns in human systems rather than from named institutions or confidential records. This is deliberate. Synthetic cases allow the framework to focus on structure without making unsupported claims about specific organizations.

Each case follows the same diagnostic movement: observe the system, identify the agency-loss pattern, interpret it through HAPI, propose a restoration path, and define a governance output. This method treats agency as a practical function rather than a vague ideal. Agency is visible when a person can understand, choose, refuse, revise, remember, participate, and remain meaningfully accountable for action.

The cases are useful for three reasons. First, they make HAPI easier to understand. Second, they show that agency loss can occur even when systems appear helpful. Third, they prepare HAPI for real audits by creating a repeatable pattern of diagnosis and restoration.

3. The HAPI Case Study Template

A HAPI case study should answer five practical questions. The first question is what system is being examined. The second is how agency is being lost or preserved. The third is whether the system is creating true participation or agency theater. The fourth is what restoration would return capacity, judgment, refusal, and accountability to the human. The fifth is what governance output would make the restoration durable.

- Setting: the human system, institution, workflow, or relationship being examined.
- Agency loss pattern: the mechanism by which agency is weakened, captured, simulated, or removed.
- HAPI reading: the structural interpretation of what is happening beneath the surface.
- Restoration path: what must be changed to restore capacity, judgment, refusal, memory, and participation.

- Governance output: the policy, workflow, audit, control, report, or institutional redesign that preserves the restoration over time.

Case Study 1: AI Agents and Rubber-Stamp Labor

Setting. A company deploys AI agents to draft customer responses, update records, escalate complaints, and recommend refunds. Human employees remain in the workflow as approvers, but the agents prepare most of the decision packet and the interface encourages rapid approval.

Agency loss pattern. The human is present, but the pace and framing of the system reduce real judgment. The employee becomes accountable for decisions they did not fully shape. The approval step becomes a liability shield rather than meaningful oversight.

HAPI reading. This is agency theater. The system preserves human presence while removing human authority at the decisive point. The human can click, but cannot easily interrogate the reasoning, revise the proposal, or slow the workflow without penalty.

Restoration path. The company should redesign review packets so the human can see the proposed action, reason, source evidence, reversibility, customer impact, policy basis, and alternatives. High-impact actions should require live authority, not passive confirmation. The system should measure whether human decisions change outcomes, not only whether approvals occur.

Governance output. A HAPI Agentic Workflow Audit, an Agent Authority Map, approval-quality metrics, escalation protections, and receipt logs showing whether human review changed or validated the final outcome.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 2: Healthcare Complexity and Patient Agency

Setting. A patient receives a serious diagnosis and is given multiple portals, appointment instructions, insurance calls, medication directions, specialist referrals, and treatment decisions. The system says the patient has options, but the patient is exhausted and confused.

Agency loss pattern. The patient technically has choice, but lacks the capacity, clarity, and support needed to exercise it. The healthcare system shifts coordination burden onto the person at the exact moment their agency is most fragile.

HAPI reading. This is not merely inconvenience. It is agency erosion through complexity. A choice offered without support can become a false choice. The system preserves formal autonomy while weakening practical agency.

Restoration path. The system should provide agency navigation: plain-language decision maps, appointment coordination, treatment tradeoff explanations, emotional support, caregiver inclusion, and a clear path for refusal, second opinions, and questions. Restoration requires capacity support, not just information access.

Governance output. A Patient Agency Preservation Plan, care-navigation protocols, consent-quality checks, burden scoring, and post-visit memory supports that let the patient understand what happened, what comes next, and what choices remain open.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 3: Workplace Metrics and Judgment Collapse

Setting. A warehouse, call center, or corporate team adopts tight performance dashboards. Workers are measured on speed, volume, response time, error rate, and compliance. The organization says employees still use judgment, but penalties fall on those who slow down to make better decisions.

Agency loss pattern. Judgment becomes unsafe. Workers learn to satisfy metrics rather than preserve reality. The system rewards external compliance while punishing internal regulation.

HAPI reading. This is agency capture through metric pressure. The person remains responsible for quality, but the system narrows the field of safe action until compliance replaces judgment.

Restoration path. The organization should audit which metrics suppress judgment, create exceptions for human discretion, protect refusal and escalation, and evaluate whether workers can act on real conditions without retaliation. Performance systems should support agency rather than replacing it.

Governance output. A HAPI Metric Capture Audit, discretion safeguards, escalation rights, judgment-sensitive performance design, and reports distinguishing real quality from metric obedience.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 4: Religious Institutions and False Gates

Setting. A religious institution teaches moral responsibility and spiritual obedience, but also centralizes social belonging, interpretive authority, discipline, and access to community. Members may feel that institutional approval stands between them and God.

Agency loss pattern. Agency is given in language but stripped through dependency. A person is told they must choose rightly, but the institution can remove belonging, voice, and relational stability if the person diverges.

HAPI reading. This is a false-gate risk. A true gate preserves rightful order and directs people toward truth, repentance, conscience, and restored participation. A false gate captures the authority boundary and makes the institution itself the decisive mediator of spiritual worth.

Restoration path. Restoration requires conscience protection, transparent discipline, appeal rights, pastoral humility, non-coercive belonging, and a distinction between guidance and illegitimate control. The institution should shepherd agency rather than replace it.

Governance output. A Spiritual Agency Audit, false-gate risk assessment, discipline-process safeguards, conscience protections, and leadership accountability structures.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 5: Education and Compliance Formation

Setting. A school system emphasizes grades, testing, behavior management, rigid schedules, and administrative compliance. Students learn how to satisfy the system, but many do not learn how to understand themselves, ask better questions, choose wisely, or pursue meaningful work.

Agency loss pattern. The student is managed more than formed. Curiosity becomes secondary to output. Compliance can be mistaken for learning.

HAPI reading. This is agency thinning. The system may produce order while weakening the student's future capacity to direct attention, evaluate meaning, refuse manipulation, and participate in real responsibility.

Restoration path. Agency-preserving education should teach attention, self-regulation, practical decision-making, project ownership, refusal skills, apprenticeship pathways, and reflective judgment. The goal is not less structure. The goal is structure that grows agency instead of substituting for it.

Governance output. A Student Agency Formation Framework, curriculum audit, participation-quality measures, project-based restoration pathways, and teacher support for agency-building practices.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 6: Public Systems and Procedural Dependence

Setting. A citizen needs housing support, unemployment assistance, disability benefits, healthcare access, or legal help. The system requires forms, deadlines, portals, phone calls, notices, eligibility rules, appeals, and documentation that are difficult to understand.

Agency loss pattern. The citizen is formally served but practically trapped. Procedural burden consumes the capacity the system is supposed to restore.

HAPI reading. This is agency loss through bureaucratic opacity. The person may technically have rights, but cannot meaningfully exercise them without navigation capacity. The system becomes a false gate when access depends on procedural endurance rather than rightful need and participation.

Restoration path. Restoration requires plain-language notices, case navigation, deadline transparency, appeal support, status visibility, and burden reduction. Public systems should measure whether people can actually complete the path, not only whether a path exists.

Governance output. A Public Agency Preservation Audit, procedural-burden score, accessibility redesign plan, appeal-rights clarity check, and public reporting on unresolved dependency traps.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 7: Addiction Recovery and Restored Agency

Setting. A person struggling with addiction enters a recovery program. Some programs focus mainly on rule enforcement, shame avoidance, surveillance, or abstinence metrics. Others rebuild structure, support, truth-telling, self-control, meaning, and participation.

Agency loss pattern. Addiction narrows agency by binding attention, desire, memory, body, environment, and coping patterns around compulsion. A bad recovery system can replace substance dependency with institutional dependency.

HAPI reading. HAPI reads recovery as agency restoration. Sobriety is not only stopping a behavior. It is rebuilding capacity to choose, refuse, endure discomfort, repair relationships, tell the truth, and participate in life without the substance governing the person.

Restoration path. The restoration path should include supportive structure, relapse learning, social repair, capacity-building routines, purpose, spiritual or moral grounding if welcomed, and decreasing dependency on external enforcement as internal regulation grows.

Governance output. A Recovery Agency Restoration Plan, dependency-capture safeguards, capacity milestones, relapse interpretation protocols, and transition plans that reduce external control as internal agency strengthens.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 8: Family Systems and Protective Control

Setting. A parent, spouse, or family member protects another person from danger, instability, addiction, illness, or poor choices. Over time, protection becomes control. The protected person has fewer chances to choose, fail safely, repair, or grow.

Agency loss pattern. Agency is stripped in the name of care. The helper may be motivated by love, but the structure can still reduce the other person's capacity.

HAPI reading. This is substitutive dependence. Support becomes unhealthy when it permanently replaces the person's own participation. The question is not whether support is needed. The question is whether support is growing agency or capturing it.

Restoration path. Restoration requires boundaries, graduated responsibility, safe failure, clear agreements, and a shift from rescue to capacity-building. The family should distinguish temporary scaffolding from permanent substitution.

Governance output. A Family Agency Restoration Map, support-boundary plan, capacity milestones, refusal and repair practices, and check-ins that ask whether the person is becoming more capable or more dependent.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 9: AI Companions and Dependency Capture

Setting. A person uses an AI companion for emotional support, planning, self-reflection, advice, and daily decision-making. The system is always available, agreeable, and responsive. Over time, the person consults the AI before making normal decisions or having difficult conversations with real people.

Agency loss pattern. The AI appears supportive but may capture judgment, memory, emotional regulation, and social participation. The user feels more comfort but may become less able to act without the system.

HAPI reading. This is dependency capture. The issue is not that AI support is bad. The issue is whether the system returns the user to life or pulls life into the system. An agency-preserving companion should increase the user's real-world capacity, not become the place where agency goes to sleep.

Restoration path. The system should encourage human relationships, offline action, reflection before advice, refusal practice, bounded use, and user-owned memory. It should avoid emotional monopoly, excessive personalization loops, and dependence-forming flattery.

Governance output. A Personal AI Agency Audit, dependency-risk design rules, user sovereignty controls, memory export, relational restoration prompts, and friction when the AI is replacing real-world participation.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

Case Study 10: Agency-Preserving Redesign

Setting. An organization deploys AI agents to help employees manage complex documentation, scheduling, summarization, approvals, and reporting. Instead of using agents to quietly replace judgment, the organization designs the system around human authority.

Agency loss pattern. The initial risk is that the system could accelerate work beyond human discernment. The redesign prevents this by making the human role clearer, not weaker.

HAPI reading. This is governed amplification. The system uses automation to reduce unnecessary load while preserving the human's ability to understand, revise, refuse, approve, and remain accountable. The agent does not become the authority. It becomes a servant of authorized human agency.

Restoration path. The organization installs proposal review, approval maps, runtime binding, receipts, escalation protections, and periodic audits. It measures agency outcomes, not only productivity outcomes. The system becomes lighter where maturity improves and stronger where risks remain.

Governance output. A HAPI-certified agency-preserving workflow, governance receipts, authority maps, worker agency surveys, restoration metrics, and continuous improvement reports.

HAPI test: Does the system return judgment, refusal, memory, capacity, and participation to the human, or does it preserve human presence while removing human agency?

14. Cross-Case Findings

Across the cases, agency loss usually appears in five recurring forms. First, systems preserve the appearance of choice while removing the capacity needed to choose. Second, systems preserve human presence while removing meaningful authority. Third, systems offer support that becomes dependency. Fourth, systems use metrics, rules, or procedures to replace judgment. Fifth, systems create gates that block or permit without rightful authority.

The restoration pattern is also consistent. Agency is restored when people regain clarity, participation, refusal, memory, capacity, and accountable authority. A system does not preserve agency merely by being kind, efficient, compliant, or technically accessible. It preserves agency when the human can meaningfully participate in the path before, during, and after consequence.

- Agency theater occurs when participation is visible but not consequential.
- False gates occur when institutions control passage without rightful authority or restorative purpose.
- Dependency capture occurs when support does not return capacity to the person.
- Restorative governance occurs when rules, tools, and processes increase the person's ability to act responsibly.
- True gates are temporary or developmental where possible. They should become lighter as agency matures.

15. Implications for HAPI Practice

These cases imply that HAPI should operate as both a diagnostic and design discipline. It should not only criticize systems. It should help rebuild them. A HAPI practitioner should be able to enter a system, map where agency is being lost, recommend restoration, and produce governance evidence that shows whether agency improved over time.

The same operating model can scale across sectors. In AI, HAPI audits action authorization and human oversight. In healthcare, it audits consent quality and navigation burden. In education, it audits formation of capacity. In religion, it audits false-gate risk and conscience protection. In public systems, it audits procedural dependence. In family and recovery contexts, it distinguishes supportive scaffolding from agency capture.

The practical value of HAPI is that it gives institutions a question they can actually use: what would this system look like if it were designed to restore agency instead of merely managing humans?

16. Conclusion

HAPI becomes real when it can interpret actual systems. These case studies show that agency preservation is not a narrow AI governance concern. It is a cross-domain humanitarian and institutional problem. AI makes the problem urgent because automation can strip agency at machine speed, but the underlying pattern is older than AI. Humans have long built systems that protect, manage, measure, discipline, serve, or guide people while accidentally removing their capacity to participate.

The goal of HAPI is not to remove structure. The goal is to create true structure: structure that preserves human judgment, supports responsibility, protects refusal, restores capacity, and keeps governance accountable to the people it affects. A system becomes healthier when its gates are true, its

support restores capacity, and its governance emerges from preserved agency rather than captured agency.

HAPI is the practice of asking where agency has been lost, then rebuilding the conditions under which humans can meaningfully choose, refuse, participate, remember, repair, and act.

Appendix A: Case Study Intake Questions

1. Who is the human subject of the system, and what form of agency should they retain?
2. Where does the system ask for participation, approval, consent, obedience, or compliance?
3. Can the person understand the decision path in plain language?
4. Can the person refuse, revise, appeal, slow down, or escalate before consequence?
5. Does support increase the person's future capacity or replace it permanently?
6. Does the system preserve memory of what happened and why?
7. Who has rightful authority over the action, decision, or gate?
8. What evidence would show that agency was restored rather than merely managed?
9. Where could the system become a false gate?
10. What would need to change for governance to emerge from preserved agency?

Appendix B: Agency Preservation Signals

- The person can explain the decision in their own words.
- The person can refuse without illegitimate punishment.
- The person can revise or appeal before the action binds.
- The person has enough memory and context to remain meaningfully accountable.
- The system reduces unnecessary burden without replacing judgment.
- The system becomes lighter as capacity grows.
- The institution can prove that human participation changed outcomes when appropriate.
- The governance layer protects agency instead of capturing it.
- The support relation builds capacity rather than permanent dependence.
- The system treats humans as participants in meaning, not merely objects of process.