

The Money Drift Glossary

Key Concepts for Understanding Incentives, Authenticity, and Economic Drift in Modern Life

Author: OffBrandGuy (aka Money Drift)

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Preface

This glossary introduces the foundational concepts of *Money Drift*—a framework for understanding how modern economic systems, distorted incentives, and corporate performance culture reshape the way we experience business, value, and authenticity. Today's economy is not just about products and services, but about the subtle engineering of friction, convenience, and identity itself. The terms collected here provide a shared vocabulary for describing how work, consumption, and everyday life are increasingly shaped by extraction models, engineered authenticity, and the erosion of trust.

Inconvenience Inflation

Definition: The hidden rise in everyday costs caused not only by higher prices, but also by added inconvenience, delays, and degraded service.

Context: Waiting longer on hold, navigating endless customer portals, or paying hidden fees all inflate the true cost of living. This is inflation measured not just in dollars, but in wasted time and cognitive load.

See also: Death of Customer Service, Friction Farming, Extraction Economy.

Friction Farming

What it is: The intentional design of small inconveniences to extract value.

Everyday signs:

- Subscription cancellations that require a phone call.
- A “log out” button hidden deep in settings.
- Pop-ups steering you back toward upgrades.

Why it matters: Inconvenience itself becomes a business model. Companies profit by making your time harder to reclaim.

Extraction Economy

An economic model built on siphoning value from users through hidden fees, engineered frictions, and engagement traps.

Example: overdraft fees that punish the vulnerable, or apps that design “loops” to keep you scrolling past ads. The extraction economy thrives on asymmetry—where corporations have more data, more leverage, and more time than the consumer.

Incentive Drift

Definition: The gradual distortion of systems as incentives push organizations away from their stated missions.

Example:

- Healthcare optimized for billing instead of healing.
- News optimized for clicks instead of truth.

Why it matters: Once incentives drift, the system itself drifts. What was supposed to create value instead creates noise, waste, or harm.

The Great Flattening

The collapse of nuance and quality into lowest-common-denominator outputs optimized for efficiency and scale.

Products, services, and even cultural experiences converge into bland sameness.

Everything feels mass-produced, interchangeable, and hollowed out.

See also: Authenticity Gap, Engineered Authenticity.

Authenticity Gap

Definition: The gulf between what organizations *promise* and what people actually get.

Example: A company markets itself as “customer-first” while replacing human service with bots.

Impact: The authenticity gap breeds cynicism. Customers assume sincerity is just another performance.

Corporate Performativity

Corporations adopting staged identities, values, or behaviors to look relevant without changing anything.

- Diversity pledges without structural shifts.
- “LinkedIn Guy” posts that mask burnout with positivity.
This is performance as strategy: corporate masks as public relations armor.

Engineered Authenticity

Definition: Experiences designed to look and feel “authentic,” while being carefully staged for commercial purposes.

Examples:

- A rustic coffee shop built by a venture-backed chain.
- An influencer’s “candid” morning routine video filmed with lighting and edits.
Authenticity becomes a product line.

Curated Authenticity

The selective presentation of self or brand identity to appear authentic, while omitting contradictions.

Think of the executive who posts about “vulnerability” as a career strategy, or the startup that shows raw office photos while hiding the sweatshop backend. This is authenticity managed like a portfolio.

Manufactured Sincerity

When sincerity itself is mass-produced.

From auto-generated apology emails to scripted influencer posts, “genuine” becomes a commodity. Sincerity is no longer spontaneous — it’s a strategy deployed at scale.

Death of Customer Service

Once you could reach a human who cared. Now you get:

- Infinite phone trees.
- AI chatbots in endless loops.
- Outsourced scripts that never solve your issue.

The decline of service isn’t an accident — it’s a deliberate shift to cut costs and push the frustration burden onto the customer.

Semantic Liability

Words that once sold trust can turn toxic when overused or betrayed. “Authentic.” “Organic.” “Customer-first.” When they no longer map to reality, they become liabilities instead of assets. Language itself becomes unstable currency in the Money Drift economy.

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Figure 1. The Extraction Ladder

This diagram shows how businesses extract value step by step. It begins with *inconvenience*—long waits, hidden fees, or confusing systems. From there, it escalates into *friction farming*, where deliberate hurdles are created to discourage consumer resistance. At higher rungs, companies capture *identity* through data harvesting and persona shaping. At the top, they erode *trust* itself, replacing authenticity with staged sincerity. The ladder illustrates how inconvenience becomes a structured model of extraction in the modern economy.

The Extraction Ladder

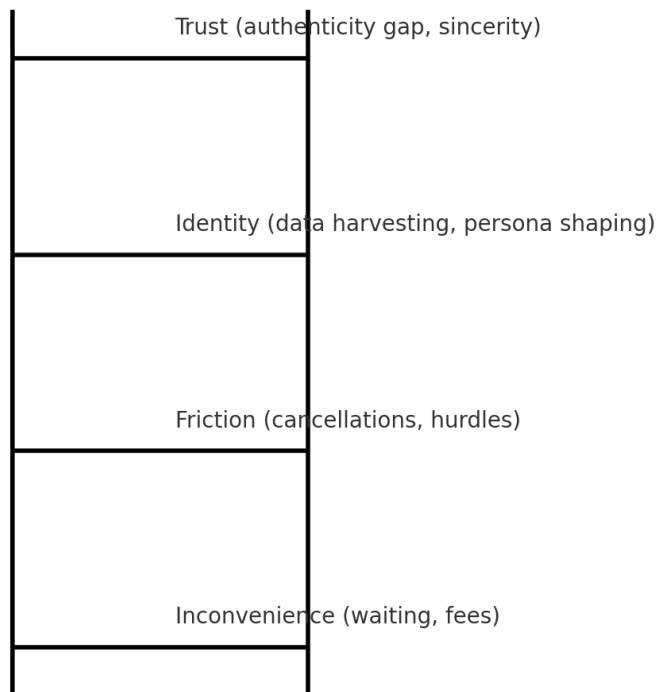
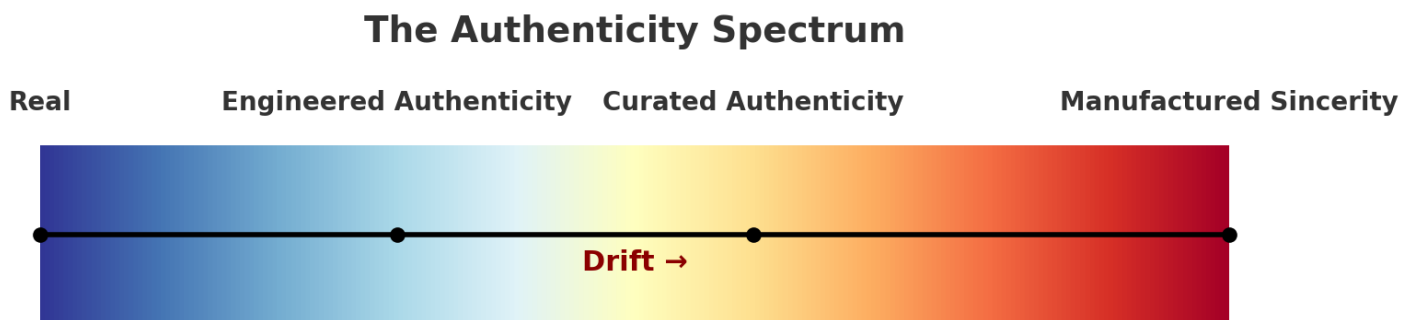


Figure 2. The Authenticity Spectrum

This spectrum illustrates the drift from *real* experiences toward staged and commodified forms of authenticity. At the first stage, experiences are genuine and unmediated. As incentives take over, businesses create *engineered authenticity* (crafted but posed), then shift into *curated authenticity* (selective self-presentation), and finally into *manufactured sincerity* (mass-produced “genuine” expression). The gradient shows how authenticity erodes across stages, moving consumers from lived reality to corporate simulation.



Appendix

[DRIFT-PROTOCOL v0.1] #DriftProtocol

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Author: OffbrandGuy (aka Money Drift)

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