

WHO DECIDES · CHAPTER SEVEN

The Field Manual

Fourteen working pages, the decision line, the sort, the round, the review and the log, ready to carry into a room.

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Chapter Seven of Who Decides. The whole book, with every chapter, is at business.hautelumiere.life/library/who-decides (DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989215).

A NOTE BEFORE YOU READ

This work is offered for education and leadership development. It is not legal, financial, accounting, investment, medical or psychological advice; take the advice of a qualified professional who knows your circumstances. Companies and events are described from the public record as the author understands it; characterisations are the author's analysis. Examples are illustrative, and no particular outcome is promised to any reader.

ABSTRACT

Fourteen working pages, the decision line, the sort, the round, the review and the log, ready to carry into a room. The chapters of this book describe five practices as people doing them. This chapter holds the working pages: the run sheets, the question sets, the logs and the one-page agreements that the earlier chapters point to and do not print. Each page is meant to be photocopied, filled in by hand or kept as a plain spreadsheet, and held in a folder that the convenor of Chapter 6 looks after. Nothing here needs software. The pages follow the order of the first ninety days, not the order of the chapters. Each opens with a line saying where it comes from and when it is used. Where a page gives a script, the words are a starting point; say them in your own voice. Where it gives a time, the time is a planning guide from practice, not a finding. Santa Anna's book on management gives the reason the small entries on these pages matter, in a sentence worth keeping at the front of the folder: "Every delegation decision is a growth opportunity or a growth suppression."

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How to use these pages

The chapters of this book describe five practices as people doing them.[33] This chapter holds the working pages: the run sheets, the question sets, the logs and the one-page agreements that the earlier chapters point to and do not print. Each page is meant to be photocopied, filled in by hand or kept as a plain spreadsheet, and held in a folder that the convenor of Chapter 6 looks after. Nothing here needs software.

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say them in your own voice. Where it gives a time, the time is a planning guide from practice, not a finding. Santa Anna's book on management gives the reason the small entries on these pages matter, in a sentence worth keeping at the front of the folder: "Every delegation decision is a growth opportunity or a growth suppression."

Two rules govern the whole manual. Write down what was decided, by whom and when, not what everyone remembers. And close what you open: a decision named and not made, an objection raised and not answered, a page written and not read, teaches the opposite of what the practice is for.

What these pages do not contain is any figure for a limit, a signal or a share, nor the design of any arrangement for sharing a measured gain: proportions, thresholds, timing or terms. Those belong to each organisation and the people it covers, and they are decided separately.

1 · The signs that decisions are waiting

From Chapters 1 to 3. Used in days one to ten, and again at day ninety.

Sit in on a meeting where decisions are taken, and read the last quarter's minutes. Tick what you see.

SIGN	SEEN?	WHERE, AND WHEN
The same item has appeared on three or more agendas		
Papers are marked *for discussion* when a choice is being asked for		
Minutes say *agreed* and nobody can say who will act		
People ask *who is signing this off?* outside the meeting		
A decision is described by its topic rather than its choice		
A common, low-risk decision needs two or more signatures above the person who raised it		
Items are carried to the next meeting for *one more piece of analysis*		
A decision is reopened by someone who was not in the room		
A running commitment has reported *continue* at every review		
Nobody can say what would make a running commitment stop		

Reading it. One or two ticks are ordinary. Three or more in the same meeting mean decisions there are waiting for something other than thought. Start the decision line (page 3) and the speeds (page 6) in that meeting.

2 · The decision inventory

From Chapter 6, after the canon's authority assessment. Used once in days one to ten.

List the fifteen to twenty most significant decisions taken in the last quarter. For each, fill one row.

DECISION (AS A CHOICE)	WHO DECIDED IN THE END	WHO HELD THE KNOWLEDGE IT NEEDED	SAME PERSON?	RAISED (DATE)	DECIDED (DATE)	REOPENED?

Underneath, answer three questions.

1. Which kinds of decision were decided far from the knowledge they needed?
2. Which waited longest between raised and decided, and what did they wait for?
3. Which could nobody say who decided?

Reading it. The rows where the third and fourth columns differ are where to look first. Bring them to the first meeting of the working group with the first-guess page.

3 · The decision line

From Chapter 1, after Rogers and Blenko (2006). Used from day eleven, at the top of every paper that asks for a deep decision.

Decision (a sentence with a choice in it: *whether to*, *which of*)
Decided by (one person)
By (date)
Heard first (who, and on what)
Must agree (only by law, written policy, or a harm they are responsible for preventing)
Carries it out
Told afterwards
Reopened only if (new information not available on the day)

Before writing it. Ask the person above, or beside, whose decision it is. Write down the answer and where it was given.

After the decision. The owner tells those heard what was decided and whether their input changed it, in a sentence each. She tells those who carry it out the decision in plain words, with the date it takes effect.

Mistakes to watch for. Naming a committee as owner. Giving five people the right to agree. Writing a topic instead of a choice. The owner, once named, going back to consulting. A senior person reopening an owned decision because it reached her as a complaint.

Signs it is working. Within a month, papers arrive with the line already filled in. Items stop being carried between meetings.

4 · The sort: where a decision belongs

From Chapter 2, after Garicano (2000). Used once in days thirty-one to fifty, for one site or function; repeat each quarter.

Gather the last twenty to thirty decisions that travelled upward from one site, team or function. Choose ordinary ones. For each, ask two questions and mark one pile.

DECISION	WHO KNEW MOST ABOUT IT ON THE DAY IT WAS RAISED?	WHAT DID THE APPROVAL ABOVE ADD? (INFORMATION · WIDER VIEW · RISK CARRIED · A REGULATOR'S INTEREST · ONLY A DATE)	PILE

The three piles.

- A · Belongs where it was raised. The person who raised it knew most; the approval added only a date. Move it down (page 5).
- B · Belongs above. The approval added something real: a view across sites, a risk the wider organisation carries, a regulator's interest. Keep it, and say why on the page.
- C · Went up because someone was stuck. Unsure of the rule, caught between departments, short of a fact. Give it an escalation path: a named person to ask, and a time within which help will come.

Reading it. Most first sorts put most decisions in pile A. Look also for decisions the person above signed without being able to recall them; they show what the chain was protecting.



5 · Moving authority in steps

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5 · Moving authority in steps

From Chapter 2, after the canon's graduated authority. Used in days thirty-one to fifty, once the sort is done.

For each class of decision in pile A, agree the step and the date it will be reviewed.

CLASS OF DECISION	STEP (1 RECOMMEND AND ACT UNLESS SOMEONE OBJECTS · 2 DECIDE AND TELL THE SAME DAY · 3 FULL AUTHORITY)	EDGES (BEYOND WHICH IT GOES UP AGAIN, SET BY THOSE WHO CARRY THE RISK)	WHO IS TOLD, AND HOW	REVIEW DATE

CLASS OF DECISION	STEP (1 RECOMMEND AND ACT UNLESS SOMEONE OBJECTS · 2 DECIDE AND TELL THE SAME DAY · 3 FULL AUTHORITY)	EDGES (BEYOND WHICH IT GOES UP AGAIN, SET BY THOSE WHO CARRY THE RISK)	WHO IS TOLD, AND HOW	REVIEW DATE

The person above. Reads the log weekly. When she would have decided differently, she says so to the person who decided, in a sentence, and the decision stands unless it breaks a law or a policy.

The person receiving the step. Records each decision and its reason in the log on the day. The first time, she will check twice and tell more people than she needs to. Whoever she tells says, in a sentence, that it was not required and is welcome.

Mistakes to watch for. A shadow approval, every decision seen before it is acted on. Edges drawn so tightly nothing moves. A newly trusted manager becoming the new bottleneck. The first decision that goes wrong taken back up for good, instead of reviewed and the edge redrawn.

6 · The speed of a decision

From Chapter 3, after the canon's three temporal modes. Used before every leadership meeting from day eleven.

Mark every agenda item before the meeting.

ITEM	SWIFT (CLEAR, REVERSIBLE, SOMEONE'S TO DECIDE)	DEEP (CONSEQUENTIAL, HARD TO REVERSE)	NOT YET RIPE	WHAT HAPPENS TO IT
				Swift: back to its owner with a note; the meeting hears the decision
				Deep: decision line (page 3), closing time, consent round (page 7)
				Not yet ripe: return date, and what is being gathered meanwhile

For a deep item, the options page. Put the options in columns and the same questions in rows, so they are compared with each other rather than one at a time.

	OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C	OPTION D
What it would cost				
What it would risk				
What it would need				
What it would make impossible				

Reading it. An item with no speed marked is not ready for the meeting.

7 · The consent round: run sheet

From Chapter 3, after Eisenhardt (1989) and sociocratic consent. Used for deep decisions from day eleven.

Before the meeting (twenty minutes, by telephone). The owner speaks privately with one experienced person who has no stake in the outcome, and hears how the decision looks to her.

At the start of the item (one minute). The owner says: *This is a deep decision, and a decision for today. We will look for agreement until (time). If we have it, good; if not, I will decide, and each of you will be asked whether you can live with it, and if not, what harm you see.*

At the closing time. The owner states the decision she is minded to take.

The round. In turn, newest member first, most senior last, each is asked: *Can you live with this, and if not, what harm do you see?* Three permitted answers:

ANSWER	WHAT HAPPENS
No objection	Note it; go on
An objection, naming a harm to the organisation's purpose	The owner chooses one, aloud: change the decision to meet it · test it (who, by when) · answer it with a reason, and record the reason
A question	Answer it, then go on

After the round. Ask one person who said nothing, privately, whether there is anything she would want the owner to know before the decision is announced. Then announce it, with the date it takes effect and who carries it out.

Mistakes to watch for. Deciding before the hearing and running the round as a formality. Answering an objection with an argument instead of one of the three responses. The owner speaking first in the discussion. Bringing swift items to the round. Reading quick silence as agreement.

Signs it is working. By the fourth meeting at least one objection has changed a decision. Deep items close on the day set.

8 · The commitment page

From Chapter 4, after Kahneman and Lovallo (1993) and the stage-gate. Written by the sponsor before any commitment of consequence is approved, and approved with it. For a commitment already running without one, written now by a reader who did not start it.

The commitment
What it is expected to show, by when, in measures already kept

How commitments like this have usually gone (the outside view)
What would make it pause and be reviewed from the beginning (signals anyone could see in a record)
Who reads each review and recommends (not the sponsor, not reporting to the sponsor)
Review dates
What a stop would release (people, money not yet spent, knowledge, parts worth keeping)
Agreed: *A recommendation to pause or stop is an ordinary outcome of a review.*
Signed and dated

Mistakes to watch for. Signals written as judgements rather than records. A reader chosen by the sponsor. A signal moved quietly when it is reached.

9 · The two-column review

From Chapter 4. Used at every review of a commitment against its page.

WHAT THE PAGE SAID WE WOULD SEE BY NOW	WHAT WE SEE

The order of the meeting.

1. Read both columns in silence before anyone speaks.
2. The reader recommends: continue · change course · pause for review · stop.
3. The person whose name is on the original proposal speaks next. The question put to her: *What do you know now that you did not know at the start?*
4. The steering group decides, and records the decision with the date.
5. If the decision is to stop, list what it releases and where each will go within a month.

Afterwards. Thank the person who recommended a pause or a stop, in public. Watch her next assignment.



10 · The decision log

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10 · The decision log

From Chapter 5. Started on day one, kept by the convenor, read weekly, reviewed quarterly.

WHAT WAS DECIDED (A SENTENCE)	RAISED (FIRST WRITTEN RECORD)	DECIDED	DECIDED BY	HEARD	REOPENED WITHIN THREE MONTHS? WHY?	WHAT IT HELD UP WHILE IT WAITED (IF A RECORD SHOWS IT)	NOTES

What counts. Decisions of consequence that cross a leadership team or travel upward: approvals, policy changes, commitments, exceptions, choices among options. Test: if it were made wrongly, would someone senior expect to hear about it?

The date raised. The first written record in which the choice was put to someone who could make it. Not the date it reached an agenda. If the record is unclear, say so in the notes.

The weekly read (five minutes). Which decisions have waited longest? Which phrases recur in the notes, *waiting for sign-off*, *parked*, *next meeting*?

11 · The quarterly review and the measurement conversation

From Chapter 5, after Nutt (1999) and the measurement standard of Where the Flow Stops. *The review is held each quarter; the measurement conversation in days sixty-one to ninety, reading the history fixed by day ten.*

The review (an afternoon). Sort the log by time from raised to decided.

1. Read the slowest tenth before the middle. For each: who decided it in the end? Who could have decided it on the day it was raised? What did the wait hold up, in a record that would show it?
2. Read the reopened decisions beside the fast ones. For each: what was missing at the start, or who overruled it later?
3. Agree one class of decision to move down, one owner to name, one commitment to give a page.
4. Write to the person who raised the slowest avoidable decision: the dates, the reason for the gap, and what has changed.

The measurement conversation. Who is in the room: the person responsible for the money, the person responsible for the operation, someone who speaks for the people whose decisions changed, and the person who will calculate.

1. What, in plain words, has changed in how the decision is made?
2. If it works, what would change in records the organisation already keeps?
3. What do those records show over the history fixed by day ten? What does an ordinary period look like?
4. What could move the figure for reasons nobody here controls? For each: will it be allowed for, from which record, and how?
5. What second measure would show decisions being made faster and worse? (The reopening rate from the log.)
6. Who will calculate, and how can it be checked by someone with no stake in the answer?
7. How, and how often, will the result be shown to the people whose decisions produced it?
8. What happens if a record or system changes during the period?

The one-page agreement. Signed before the period it measures begins, or from today if a change has already begun.

What has changed
Main measure, and the record it comes from
History used, and the ordinary range it shows
What moves the figure that nobody controls, and how each is allowed for
Balancing measure (reopening rate), and its record
Who calculates; who checks
How and how often the result is shown, and to whom
What happens if a record or system changes
Date agreed
Signed

Mistakes to watch for. A baseline from the worst recent quarter. An adjustment proposed after results are known. Time measured alone. A calculation done privately and announced. Someone in the room going quiet.

12 · The ninety days on one page

From Chapter 6.

DAYS	PRACTICE	WHO	TIME IT TAKES	WHAT IT PRODUCES	EARLY SIGN IT IS GOING WRONG
1–10	Count: start the log, sit in, the inventory (page 2), fix a dated copy of the history	Sponsor, convenor	Sponsor about 4 hours a week; convenor about 2	A first-guess page: where decisions wait	A sudden rise in what reaches the sponsor's desk
11–30	Name and close: speeds (page 6), decision line (page 3), consent round (page 7) in two meetings	Sponsor	About 10 minutes a meeting	Deep items closed on the day set	Deep items still carried to a second meeting in week four
31–50	Move down: the sort (page 4), steps of authority (page 5)	Working group; sponsor and the manager concerned	An afternoon to sort; an hour to agree	Classes of decision decided where they are raised	Moved decisions still showing two names in the log
41–70	Pages for what is running (pages 8 and 9)	Leadership; a reader for each commitment		Every running commitment with a	

DAYS	PRACTICE	WHO	TIME IT TAKES	WHAT IT PRODUCES	EARLY SIGN IT IS GOING WRONG
			An hour per page; a review per commitment	page and a review date	Right-hand columns written in adjectives
61–90	The measurement conversation (page 11)	Finance leads; operations; those whose decisions moved; calculator	Two meetings of 90 minutes	A signed page and a first monthly figure	Someone in the room goes quiet

13 · The day-ninety review

From Chapter 6. A meeting of the working group and the sponsor, about two hours.

Bring the first-guess page, the log of this quarter and the quarter before, the sorted stack with its steps, the commitment pages with their reviews, and the signed measurement page.

Ask, in order:

1. Where was the first guess right, and where was it wrong?
2. Which decisions now have an owner that had none?
3. How has the time from raised to decided changed, in the slowest tenth and the middle, and has the reopening rate moved with it?
4. Which classes of decision were moved down, and what happened to them?
5. Which commitments were read against a page, and what was decided?
6. Is there a gain both sides believe, and what does it show so far?
7. Who is now deciding who was not, and who has stopped?
8. Which of the practices is not yet real, and what would make it real?

What not to conclude. That the culture of decision-making has changed (ninety days show whether practices are kept, not whether a culture has moved). That one faster quarter is a gain. That a log with few changes means there were few problems; it usually means one of the earlier steps is not yet real, and the first place to look is whether owners are really being named.

14 · The first Monday

From Chapter 6. For anyone who wants to begin with less.

- Mark each item on the next agenda you chair as swift, deep or not yet ripe. Send the swift ones back to their owners.

- Write one decision that has been on more than one agenda as a sentence with a choice in it, and ask whose it is. Write down the answer.
- Start the log: seven columns, this week's decisions.

The decisions waiting in your building

A decision is often waiting not for an answer but for someone to know whose answer it is. Naming the owner costs one sentence.

Luminous Prosperity Inc. takes this work into organisations as a gainshare. The flow is opened from the inside, with the people who already hold what the firm knows. The gain is counted from records the firm already keeps, against a measure both sides sign before anyone knows the answer, and the house is paid as a share of what is found: between thirty and ten per cent of it.

The book sorts the decisions of one team. Which of yours wait longest, and what deciding sooner would be worth, is read from your own records and your own people. That begins with a conversation.

REQUEST A CONVERSATION

References

1. Sources for this chapter: the sources behind these pages are given in full in the notes to Chapters 1 to 5: Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), Aghion and Tirole (1997), Rogers and Blenko (2006) and Bain & Company's RAPID page for pages 1 to 3; Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Théorêt (1976), Garicano (2000), Leana (1986) and Bloom, Sadun and Van Reenen (2012) for pages 4 and 5; Eisenhardt (1989), Baum and Wally (2003), Perlow, Okhuysen and Repenning (2002) and Janis (1972) for pages 6 and 7; Staw (1976, 1981), Arkes and Blumer (1985), Ross and Staw (1986), Sleesman and colleagues (2012), Kahneman and Lovallo (1993) and Mitchell, Russo and Pennington (1989) for pages 8 and 9; Simon (1955, 1956), Nutt (1999) and Dean and Sharfman (1996) for pages 10 and 11; Santa Anna, A. *Conscious Governance Models*, "The Authority Distribution Assessment", "Principle 1", "Principle 4", "Principle 5", "For Those Who Receive Distributed Authority" and "Responsive to time"; *Empowerment-Driven Management*, introduction; *Inclusive Decision-Making Protocols*, "Practical Exercise: The Decision Architecture Audit"; *The Luminous 100*, "Stage-Gate Process (Robert Cooper)" and "Sociocracy (Governance by Consent)". The Luminous Developmental Canon; Luminous Prosperity Inc. The times given are planning guides from practice, not findings of a study.

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