Deciding Effectively
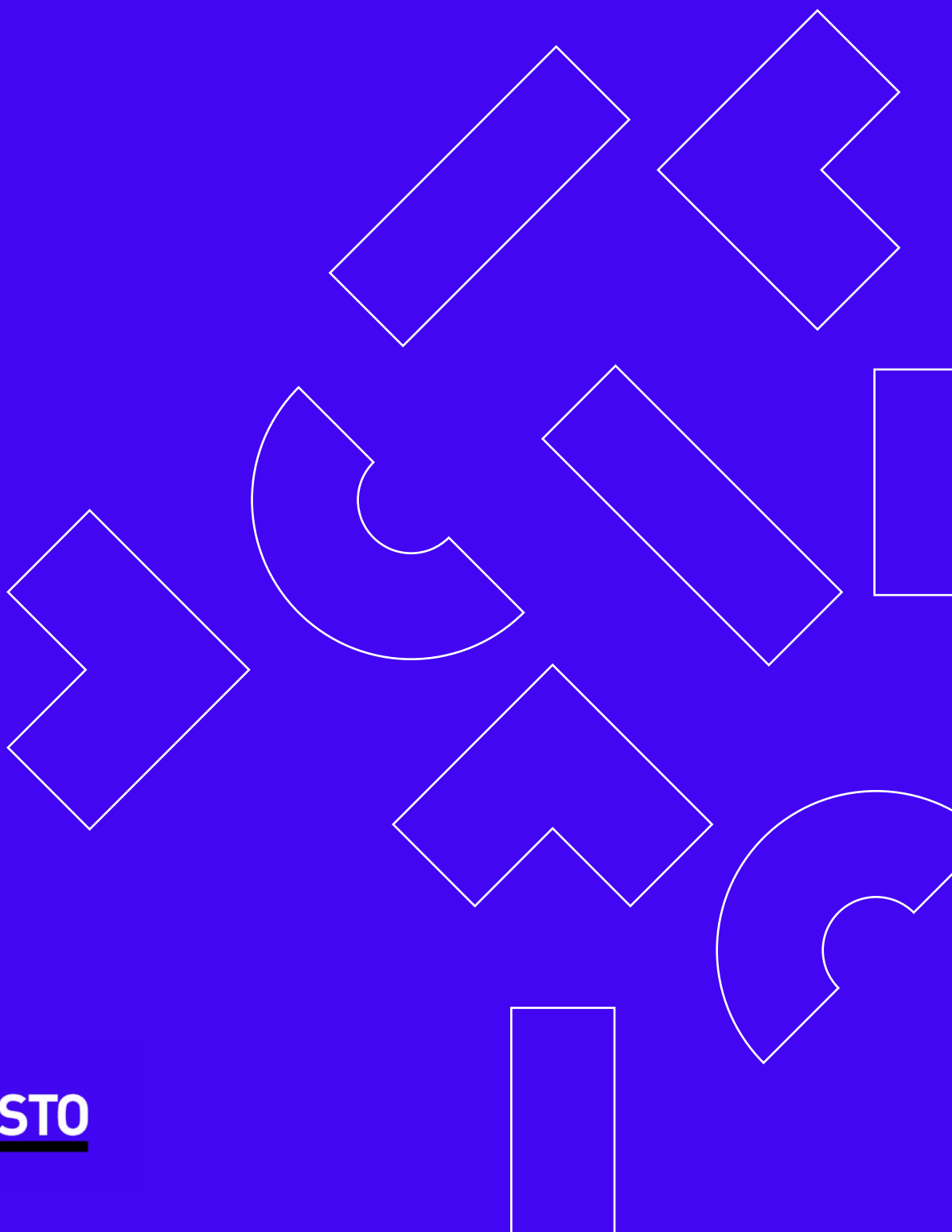
Developing an organisational
culture that can make and
execute better decisions faster

MANIFESTO

Contents

Foreword

Manifesto is so named because, back in 2011, I wrote a real Manifesto for starting the business. It was naive and idealistic; a vision for the kind of company I'd like to work for. Without knowing exactly what I was trying to express I was pushing back against the environments and projects where I'd had little opportunity to influence the decision-making process. I wanted a team that fully believed in the way we approached our work, and I knew that came down to how we set things up.

"

To bring together clever people and give them the space and tools they need to be brilliant, to then channel this brilliance in a way that can make people's lives better, easier, fairer, more interesting or fun through the use of technology.

I went on to set out 14 points focused around what it meant 'to be Manifesto'. Many things have changed along the way—we're much larger and now part of a publicly listed group, the needs of our customers are increasingly complex, and my desire to do what we do beyond digital has grown steadily over the last five years. But there's plenty from this statement from 2011 that still rings true, for example:

I've spent the last 12 years working in web and new media, working with some brilliant, clever minds and companies. I've also worked on many difficult projects with overstretched companies and people committed to unreasonable aims.

The idea for this whitepaper came from an experience on a client site in early 2019 where someone said "if only everyone could make better decisions". My reflection based on this observation was that to enable better decisions at an individual level, you need to enable better decision-making in your organisation, and this in turn means changes for the roles of leaders and better communication throughout organisations.

If you take a really simple question asked nearly every day in any organisation such as 'Who should attend a meeting' or 'What's the most important thing for me to work on today', how frequently is that question affected by things that don't help get the right answer? Or sadly, where people don't feel empowered to make the decision they know is right because of the culture they operate in?

The alignment and coordination of the right people in the right place, with the right information, to make the right decision at the right time, is perhaps the most important aspect of running any organisation. History (and perhaps our natural instincts) push us toward hierarchical methods of achieving this, when the research tells us this isn't the answer.

There are a plethora of books on the topic of decision-making and making better organisations, but what we've found when working with clients is an uncertainty of where to start. In this whitepaper we've sought to cut away the noise and pull out the key concepts that can be gradually applied in your existing organisation.

Humans are complex and we all like to think that our decision-making processes are robust, but we're certainly not perfect. Through the examples in the whitepaper we cover everything from cognitive biases and the value of information, to the different ways in which organisations make and communicate decisions, good and bad. With machine learning and AI providing the ability to map our workplaces and understand the decisions being taken across our organisations, the ability to make better decisions and remove our blindspots is gaining pace.

I think it's as we start to view and analyse organisations as cohesive systems (people, processes, tools, technology and culture) we'll clearly see how we can revolutionise how decisions are made —including using intelligent assistive technology to point out the things we wished we'd known.

Perhaps though, we don't always need technology to achieve better outcomes. Simply questioning our own intent—whether it's the right one given the context, and if we're setting up others to be as effective as possible—is a very human action which is often all too easy to forget in today's busy world of work. There's no substitute for remembering to breathe.

Coming back to why we created this whitepaper, it's designed as a decision-making starter kit—some ideas to help you form habits and behaviours that drive better decision-making—from setting a vision to checking in with yourself.

Jim Bowes
CEO, Manifesto

Introduction

For today's organisation, striving to succeed amid rapid technological change and major societal upheavals, the ability to make and act on decisions quickly is critical. As the needs and behaviours of customers, supporters, members and other stakeholders evolve with each new innovation or social trend, and as multiple competitors seek to exploit each new opportunity that arises, shortening the loop between acquiring insight and acting on it is becoming an existential imperative in every sector.
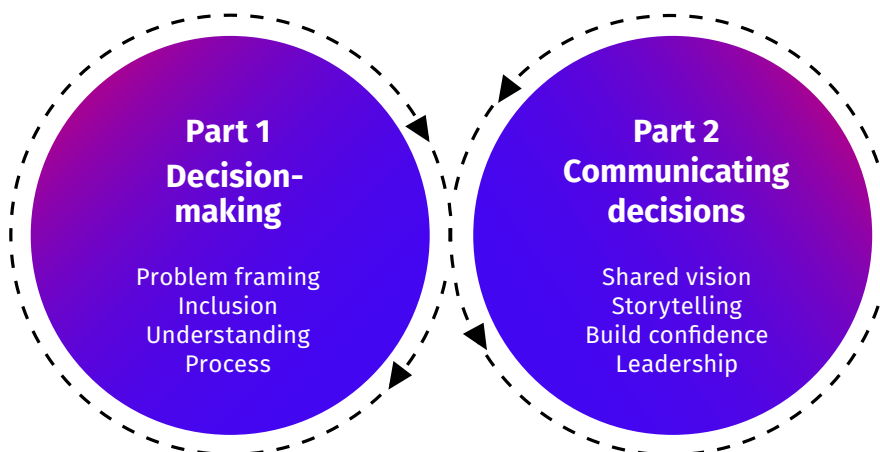
Your organisation's approach to decision-making and to bringing people along with the outcomes of those decisions, must be optimised for speed. But your approach must also be appropriate for your organisation as it's currently composed—taking into account your people, structure and the expectations of all your stakeholders. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all recipe for how to make better decisions and how to align people behind those decisions, and this paper doesn't intend to provide one. Rather, we're going to offer up a toolbox of methods and approaches to decision-making and internal communications around decision-making that have proven successful in other 21st-century organisations and that may also work for you.

We've included approaches from a diverse range of thinkers, so that whatever your organisation looks like, you'll find advice to help you push your organisation towards consistently making and executing better decisions, faster.

We've split the paper into two sections to make it easier to pick out the parts that are relevant to you. Part one deals with decision-making itself—who is responsible for making decisions, which decisions they should be focusing on, processes they can use to reach better decisions more quickly, and the biological, neurological and sociological hurdles which can cause them to stumble. Part two deals with communicating decision outcomes throughout the organisation and winning people's backing for implementing them—how to establish a shared vision, how to use storytelling to win and strengthen support, and how to navigate the difficult conversations that tough decisions often engender.

This split shouldn't be taken as a sign that we're advocating treating these two different aspects of decision-making as separate issues. You'll notice that many of our influences recommend bringing affected parties into the room where decisions are being made as early as possible. This not only ensures a diversity of voices, but helps you utilise all your organisation's relevant wisdom when deciding on what course of action to take and how to go about it. Hopefully, no matter where your organisation lies on the spectrum between autocracy and holacracy, this paper will provide the ideas you need to help shift your decision-making locus to where it's most effective.

Deciding Effectively outline

Part 1
Decision-making

Problem framing
Inclusion
Understanding
Process

Part 2
Communicating decisions

Shared vision
Storytelling
Build confidence
Leadership

01

01

How to improve decision-making in your organisation

In a survey of over 2,000 senior executives, McKinsey found that 72% thought their companies made bad decisions as often, or more often, than good decisions.[1] While that level of self-awareness can only be a good thing, it raises a critically important question for most organisations: why are our traditional decision-making practices failing and how can they be improved to generate better decisions?

The literature we reviewed for this paper, as well as our own experience of working on the digital transformation efforts of organisations of various sizes over the past decade, indicates that there are three main aspects to consider in any decision: the framing of the problem; the ownership of the decision; and the process used to arrive at a decision.

Framing a problem well means selecting the right decisions to make—ones that have a high value, that are actionable, and that produce outcomes that can be measured. Choosing the right people to make the decision means selecting people who have a stake in the issue, who can provide relevant advice and expertise, and who are accountable for their decisions. The right process will ensure a strong link between those responsible for making the decision and those responsible for delivering the solution.

In this section we'll share some of the most effective tools and techniques for choosing the right problems, bringing together suitable people to tackle them, and ensuring that they have a robust process to follow.

72%
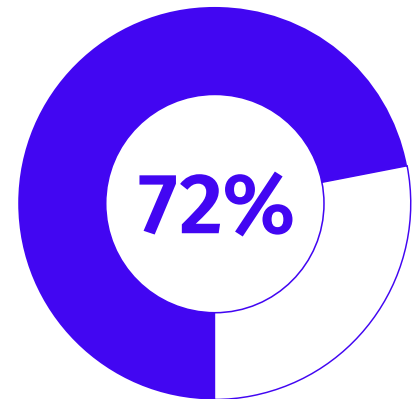
72% of senior executives thought their companies made bad decisions as often, or more often, than good decisions.[1]

[1] www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/
our-insights/the-case-for-behavioral-strategy

Focus on the right problems

In 1957 C. Northcote Parkinson put forward his 'law' of triviality, which argued that members of an organisation give disproportionate weight to trivial issues. This issue of problem selection is perhaps even more important now. In an age of instantaneous communication and global interconnection, the effects of poor decision-making are felt much more quickly. In a 2017 Harvard Business Review article, *Are You Solving the Right Problems?*, innovation consultant Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg reported that 85% of C-suite executives at 91 private and public-sector companies agreed that their organisations were bad at problem diagnosis.[2]

Spending time and effort on the wrong problems wastes both resources and goodwill. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos recognises that not all decisions carry the same value, which is why he insists on not wasting time deliberating over decisions that can easily be reversed.[3]

But most of us are not in the position of an all-powerful CEO exercising total autonomy. Working in teams of people, we need processes that help us correctly frame problems through a collaborative process.

> "
> Spurred by a penchant for action, managers tend to switch quickly into solution mode without checking whether they really understand the problem.
>
> **Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg**

[2] hbr.org/2017/01/are-you-solving-the-right-problems
[3] www.inc.com/jeff-haden/amazon-founder-jeff-bezos-this-is-how-successful-people-make-such-smart-decisions.html

▍Problem-framing techniques

In the 2015 book, *Frame Innovation*, Kees Dorst introduced a problem-framing technique that aims not just to generate solutions to a given problem but to create new approaches to the problem situation itself.[4] An application of design thinking to organisational problem solving, it has since been adapted for use in a wide range of scenarios.

Manifesto's Client Strategy Director Kjell Eldor-Evans has applied this easy-to-use formula to structuring workshops that keep people focused on a set of problems and their potential solutions. Perhaps counterintuitively, it involves structuring a workshop in a way that shuts down open-ended, unstructured discussion.

> **"**
>
> **But wait, no open-ended, unstructured discussion? Isn't that what creative problem solving is all about? Weirdly, it's not. In my experience, the most creative solutions and the most clear-minded decisions have always sprung from the most disciplined, structured workshops. It's almost as if, when the group submits itself to a rigid process, individual agendas are set aside, allowing everyone to focus their creative energies on the problems at hand.**
>
> **Kjell Eldor-Evans**
> Client Strategy Director at Manifesto

In Kjell's ten-step approach, the only materials you need are a whiteboard, pens and sticky notes—but he stresses the importance of having a facilitator who will both keep time and vigorously moderate discussion, someone who will focus intently on keeping the workshop on point.
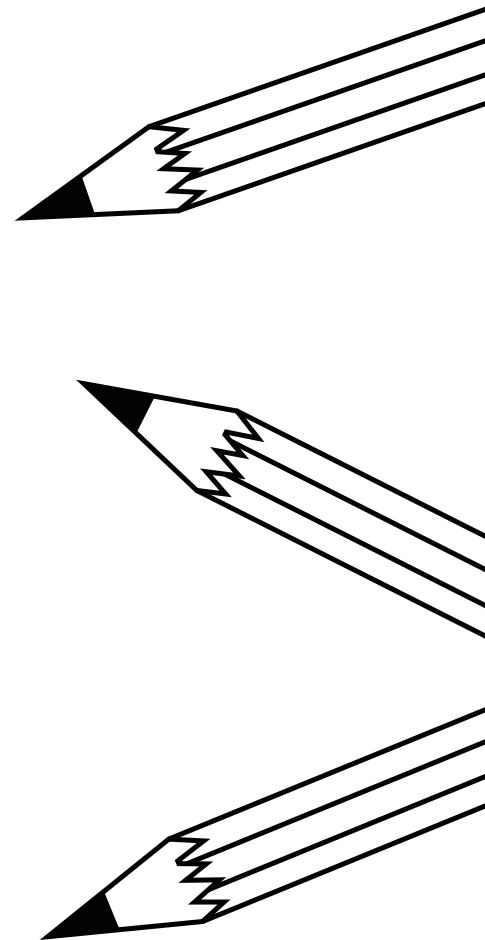
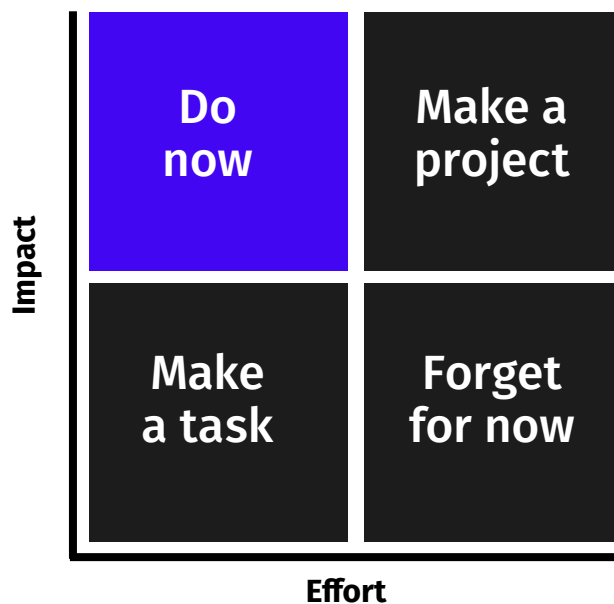[4] www.goodreads.com/book/show/23461421-frame-innovation

10 steps to framing your problems

01 **What's working.** Everyone writes down what's currently working well within the area under discussion. One idea per sticky note. No talking. (5 mins)

02 **Explain what's working.** Everyone takes a turn at putting each of their ideas on the whiteboard, explaining them as they go. (2 minutes each)

03 **What's the problem.** Everyone writes down what they see as the problems, challenges, issues or concerns around the chosen topic. One idea per sticky note. No talking. (5 mins)

04 **Show the problems.** Everyone puts their ideas on the whiteboard, keeping them separate from the positives, but this time they don't explain them. That way, they avoid getting sidetracked by personal criticisms. (1 min each)

05 **Vote on the problems.** Now everyone uses dots to vote on the problems (not the positives) that they see as most important. Everyone is free to vote on their own ideas and they can vote more than once. (3 mins)

06 **Reframe the problems.** The facilitator ranks the problems in order of how many votes they got, discarding any that got no votes, or only one vote. They then reframe these problems as 'How might we…' statements. (3 mins)

> **!** For example, 'I don't understand our audiences' might become 'How might we gain a better understanding of our audiences?'

07 **Ideate solutions.** Taking each problem statement in turn, everyone comes up with as many ideas as they can for solving the problem. (5 mins per problem)

08 **Vote on the solutions.** Taking each 'How might we' statement in turn, everyone votes on what they think are the best potential solutions. As before, everyone can vote on their own solutions, and can vote more than once. (5 mins per problem)

09 **Rank the solutions.** The facilitator ranks the solutions for each problem, discarding those with no votes, or only one vote. (3 mins)

10 **Prioritise the solutions.** The facilitator now draws a set of axes on the whiteboard, one representing effort and another representing impact. Taking instruction from the group (but avoiding open-ended discussion) the facilitator places each potential solution onto the axes according to the effort/impact involved in implementing it.

Do now	**Make a project**
Make a task	**Forget for now**

Impact (vertical axis) — Effort (horizontal axis)

What you're left with at the end of a problem-framing session is a set of solutions that the whole group has agreed to pursue right now (those in the 'high-impact, low-effort' quadrant) and a backlog of tasks and projects to investigate in the future (those in the 'low-impact, low-effort' and 'high-impact, high-effort' quadrants respectively).

▍An introduction to problem-framing

At Manifesto, we hold workshops to introduce teams to the ten steps to framing your problems, and the importance of a facilitator to vigorously moderate discussion to keep the problem-framing workshop on point. Attendees learn valuable methods to facilitate problem solving, saving time and speeding up decision-making by identifying the right problems, helping to enable their team to move forward quickly with projects.
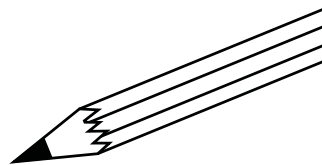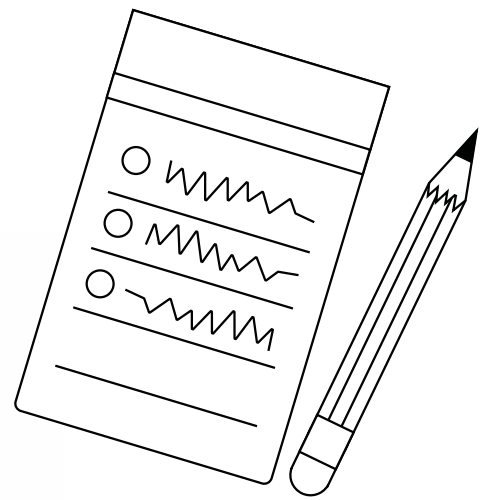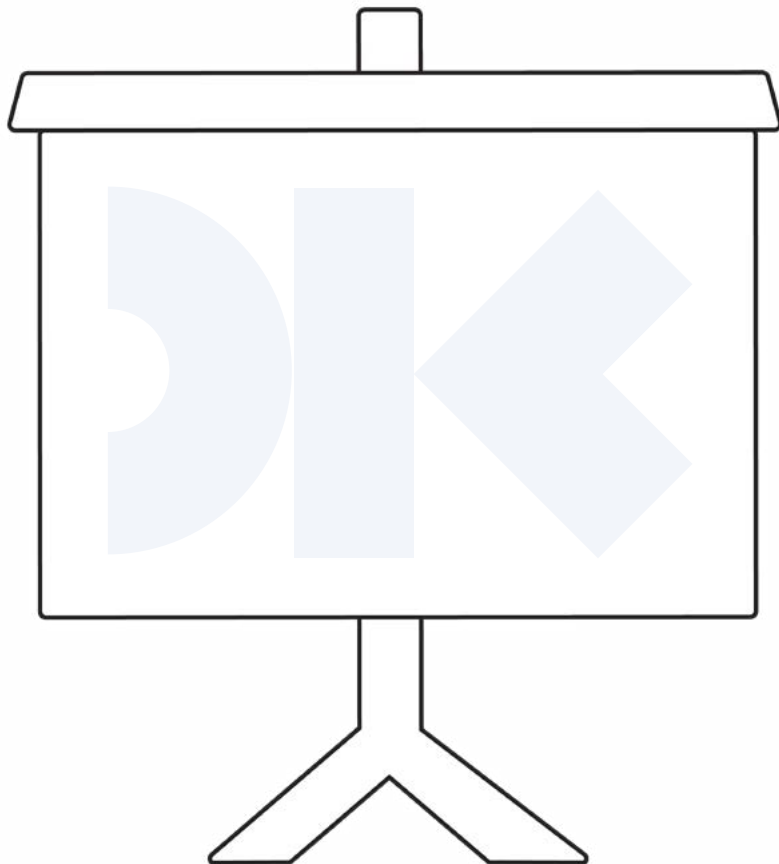
Data-driven decision-making

Data-driven decision-making (or DDDM) is the process of making organisational decisions based on actual data rather than intuition or observation alone. With the rise of artificial intelligence we may be able to look forward to a day when all organisational decision-making is automated and companies can be left to run themselves while we pursue more pleasurable activities, but until then, leaders need to get better at using data in a way that supports good decision-making. The first step is realising that not all metrics are created equal.

In Lean Analytics: Use Data to Build a Better Startup Faster, Alistair Croll and Benjamin Yoskovitz provide some useful characteristics for recognising numbers that can drive positive change:

Comparative – a good metric can be compared across e.g. time periods, groups of users or competitors. "Conversion rate is up compared to the same period last year" is more meaningful than "conversion rate is 2%".

Understandable – good metrics can be remembered and discussed.

Ratio or rate – good metrics are easy to act on. On a car journey, distance travelled is informational whereas speed is a ratio. It tells us something about the current state of the system and whether you need to go faster or slower. Ratios are also good for combining two factors that might be in tension e.g. new users of an app vs paid subscribers.

Changes the way you behave – good metrics are aligned to organisational goals. They may show you how close or far you are from your ideal position, or provide the results of user testing of experimental changes to your product or service.[5]
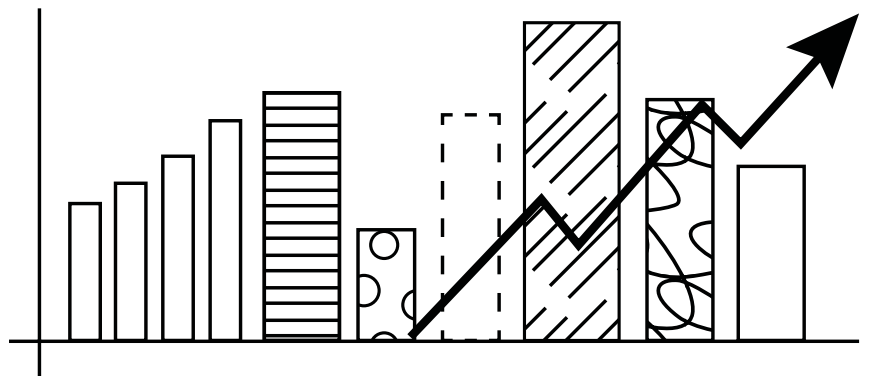
[5] books.google.co.uk/books?id=VJS5qQWOKUIC

Bring together the right people

The literature is in no doubt on this one: diversity is key to good decision-making. Getting people together with different viewpoints to make decisions collaboratively can lead to better decisions. On the other hand, inviting too many people into the decision-making process can dramatically increase the time it takes to reach a decision.

So, how many people is enough? How can we make sure the decision-making group is sufficiently diverse? And should the decision ultimately rest with a single member of the group, or should the responsibility be shared?

Ideal size of team

The debate over the ideal number of people to include in a decision-making team has been raging for decades. Bain & Company insist on the Rule of Seven: "every person added to a decision-making group over seven reduces decision effectiveness by 10 percent. If you take this rule to its logical conclusion, a group of seventeen or more rarely makes any decisions."[6]

A study conducted by J. Richard Hackman, a professor of social and organisational psychology at Harvard, in 1970, found that the optimal team size was 4.6 people.[7] After that, adding more people hurts team performance.

More recently, a 2008 study by Gary Salton drew data from 3,815 teams to discover a 'Goldilocks zone' when it comes to team size. The most successful teams tend to have between four and nine members. Within this zone, the diversity of thought brought by additional members outweighs the increased complexity of communication. Outside the zone, that relationship goes into reverse.[8]

> **"**
> **Every person added to a decision-making group over seven reduces decision effectiveness by 10 percent. If you take this rule to its logical conclusion, a group of seventeen or more rarely makes any decisions.**
>
> **Bain & Company**
> *Decide & Deliver*

[6] www.bain.com/insights/books/decide-and-deliver
[7] archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/06/12/8379238/index.htm
[8] garysalton.blogspot.com/2008/01/leadership-diversity-and-goldilocks.html

Case Study

Charting a digital roadmap through design sprints

Manifesto's innovation hub, Future Foundry, brought together a number of key stakeholders from the National Trust in a Design Sprint process to build a high-level digital road map for 2020–2025. Facilitating the team's collaboration over an intense three-day period which took in organisational context, known initiatives, and trends in the digital world, we helped produce a new vision for digital, mapping out key projects and recommending enabling activities.

This roadmap cascades down from an overarching mission into specific goals and themes for each year. It sets out activities for supporting the current portfolio of products, for core projects and initiatives, and for innovation projects.

The new digital roadmap provides a high-level view of the possible shape of digital projects at the National Trust between 2020 and 2025. Over the coming months, this vision will be tested, iterated and challenged to build a robust view of the period and guide the organisation on a path of dual transformation.

Read more:
Future Foundry
Design Sprint Process

▍Inclusion

Utilising the diversity of viewpoints within your organisation can help you make better decisions. Decades of research conducted by social scientists has shown that groups that are socially diverse are more innovative than homogeneous groups. This is because interacting with people who are different encourages group members to get creative and adopt different perspectives in their search for solutions to complex, non-routine problems.[9]

But simply recognising this fact doesn't automatically lead to more inclusion in your decision-making groups. Often, organisations find themselves with a significant 'inclusion gap', where decision-making groups are noticeably more homogeneous than the overall organisation. And, sadly, organisations that are more diverse overall are just as likely as less diverse organisations to suffer from this decision-making inclusion gap. One of the reasons for this is the tendency of members of dominant groups to set a lower bar for diversity than members of non-dominant groups.[10]

Cloverpop founder and decision-making expert Erik Larson believes that all organisations can reach 100% inclusive decision-making. He recommends increasing transparency around the diversity of decision-making groups in your organisation, through a three-step process:

1. **Share research** on the importance of improving diversity in decision-making.

2. **Record decisions** and keep track of who was included in the groups that made them.

3. **Share data** on the makeup of your decision-making groups. Tracking the inclusion rate and reviewing it on a regular basis allows you to take steps to continue improving it.[11]

[9]   www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter
[10] qz.com/work/1702760/diversity-measuring-how-and-why-groups-see-it-differently
[11] www.forbes.com/sites/eriklarson/2018/06/13/how-to-use-inclusive-decision-making-to-drive-innovation-and-performance-part-two/#50570b3c6a7d

This sounds like a great deal of work if all you're focusing on is the next big decision. However, taking a longer-term view is critical here, since diversity leads to good decisions, and the rapidly-changing world around us means that the rate at which we need to make good decisions is increasing all the time. Using this process, Cloverpop increased female representation in their workforce from 37% to 45%, and the rate of inclusive decision-making grew from 56% to 92% percent in just six months.

Manifesto is a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, to support an open, supportive and inclusive culture and this includes how decisions are made in the organisation.

Read more:
Stonewall Diversity
Champions programme

> **"**
>
> **We've had a really great response to actively promoting diversity at Manifesto. Our aim was to drive open and inclusive conversations, and we now have a fully dedicated inclusivity committee which provides support, shares awareness and champions diversity at Manifesto. We've created a positive space for staff to understand, discuss and engage with agency objectives and results, and seek input on decisions on a regular basis. What's most important to us is having a creative, dynamic team who are empowered to share their voice and feel safe in challenging decisions.**
>
> **Rebecca Hull**
> **Manifesto COO**

The science of bad decision-making

There are a number of natural phenomena discovered by scientists and sociologists that contribute to poor organisational decision-making.

▌Cognitive biases

In his 2011 book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, celebrated psychologist Daniel Kahneman separates human decision-making processes into two systems. In the second, the 'slow', people use reason and logic to make their judgements, in the first, the 'fast', judgements are made based on heuristics and rules of thumb. Social pressures, self interest, emotion and the mind's limited information-processing ability all contribute to these cognitive biases which, while sometimes remarkably useful, often lead us to make bad calls.[12] Here are a few relevant examples:

The **anchoring bias** (or focalising) causes people to prize one piece of information or value more highly than any other when making decisions. It's often the first piece of information they come across, e.g. the list price of a house.

The **confirmation bias** causes people to filter out relevant information that contradicts their previously-held beliefs and seek out information that supports their preconceptions. It's the reason echo chambers exist.

The **Dunning-Kruger effect** causes unskilled individuals to overestimate their abilities and experts to underestimate their abilities.

The **information bias** causes people to seek out more information for their decisions, even when it can have no effect on their actions.

The **sunk cost fallacy** causes people to continue to commit resources to a course of action based on the amount of resources already committed. Also known as 'throwing good money after bad'.

Overconfidence causes people to place much more faith in their own estimates and projections than is warranted.

[12] www.goodreads.com/book/show/11468377-thinking-fast-and-slow

▌Group effects

It's not just individuals who fall victim to cognitive biases. Groups of people can suffer from similar effects which cause them to make irrational decisions. 'Groupthink' has long been used as a label for a variety of errors which are caused by informational signals (getting bad information from other group members) and reputational pressure (the avoidance of others' disapproval).[13]

Recent psychological research has identified common errors that groups fall prey to.

Amplifying errors occur when groups compound the errors that result from individual cognitive biases. For example, groups tend to be even worse at estimating the time and resources required for a particular task in an amplification of the *planning fallacy*.

Cascade effects cause groups to quickly coalesce around a decision that gets early support, either because of informational signals (it's a popular choice) or reputational pressure (someone important backs it).

Polarisation in deliberating groups is the tendency to move towards more-extreme ends of the spectrum of viewpoints. If an average of initial estimates by group members is low, subsequent estimates are likely to be even lower and vice versa.

The **common knowledge effect** causes groups to put more value on information that everyone knows when making decisions, and to devalue information that is held by only a few group members.

▌Bounded rationality

No one involved in a decision-making process has perfect information about the system they're operating in. You don't, for example, know how your competitors will respond to your actions, or whether your customers will buy your new product. Bounded rationality describes people's normal decision-making behaviour, where they make reasonable decisions based on the information they have available to them. In *Thinking In Systems: A Primer*, pioneering environmental scientist Donella Meadows explains how the bounded rationality of the individual

members of a group can often lead to decisions that are bad for the group as a whole. It also accounts for why people tend to conform to the role which they find themselves playing based on the information streams they're exposed to, even if they previously played a role which exposed them to different information streams. For example, in simulations with students playing the role of fishermen, and exposed only to the information that fishermen are privy to in real-world systems, the students overfish. When cast as financiers, they overinvest in booms and underinvest in busts.[14]

▍ Ladder of inference

The ladder of inference is a tool initially devised by Chris Argyris, former professor at Harvard Business School, which exposes the chains of reasoning that can reinforce erroneous beliefs and drag groups and organisations off course over time. It describes four steps in mental reasoning which feel logical at the time, but which are always based on recent experience:

1. We begin with the pool of information available to us—the observable data and experiences.

2. We then select some of the information—typically that which grabs our attention or seems particularly significant—and ignore the rest.

3. Then, we interpret the information, drawing on personal/cultural meanings and making assumptions based on those meanings.

4. Finally, we draw a conclusion based on that interpretation. Over time, these conclusions inform our beliefs and drive our actions.[15]

The ladder of inference is thus cyclical, with the conclusions from one cycle contributing to the baseline assumptions of the next. Remembering, due to the precepts of bounded rationality, that the initial pool of information is *always* less than perfect, the ladder of inference describes how a positive feedback loop of error can emerge.

[14] www.goodreads.com/book/show/3828902-thinking-in-systems
[15] www.extension.harvard.edu/professional-development/blog/solving-problem-problem-solving-meetings

Give them a robust process

Consensus-style decision-making has grown in popularity in recent years. In this decision-making approach, a group discusses possible ways forward, addressing the concerns of each member, until they find a solution that all can agree upon (or at least live with). It's an approach that is credited with producing more informed and therefore more accurate decisions, and also aligns with the ideals of inclusion, equality and fairness that many modern organisations purport to value highly.

The problem with consensus decision-making, and the reason it's seen a backlash from a growing number of CEOs at organisations which rushed to embrace it, is that it's slow. As Google CEO Larry Page said in the closing speech at a recent Zeitgeist event, "there are no companies that make good slow decisions." When he assumed his role at the company in 2011, he sent a company-wide email mandating that "every meeting must have one clear decision maker. If there's no decision maker—or no decision to be made—the meeting shouldn't happen."

Similarly, in a 2016 letter to shareholders, Amazon chief Jeff Bezos explained how he uses the phrase "disagree and commit" to describe how leaders can ask others to press ahead with decisions when there's no consensus, thereby ensuring decision-making that is both high quality and high velocity.

Bain & Co's RAPID framework for organisational decision-making also recommends making clear who has ultimate accountability in a decision-making process: "when the roles involved in decisions are clearly delineated, teams and organisations make the right choices—swiftly and effectively." In this section, we'll hear more about RAPID and other decision-making frameworks which vary in terms of where they place the power to decide.

> "
>
> **… there are no companies that make good slow decisions.**
>
> **Larry Page**
> CEO, Google

▍Consensus

As we've seen, the consensus style of decision-making has come in for some rough handling by CEOs looking to maintain a high decision velocity. But there are still some scenarios where the need for consensus among stakeholders is both necessary and desirable.

Taking a purely practical perspective, recent research by MIT's Sloan School of Management classified the types of error that result from group decision-making into two broad categories: commission errors, where decisions made lead to negative outcomes; and omission errors, where decisions made lead to missing positive outcomes.[16] For example, if a board of directors decided to approve an acquisition that turned out badly for the company, this would be a commission error, whereas if the board decided to pass on the opportunity, which ended up being successfully taken advantage of by a competitor, this would be an omission error. The MIT study found that consensus-style decision-making minimised errors of commission, whereas majority-rule or delegated decision-making minimised errors of omission.

The authors suggest adapting the decision-making style used according to which kind of error would be more costly. This is why it makes sense for tech companies like Google and Amazon—for whom missing out on the next big technology trend would be hugely damaging—to use delegated decision-making, whereas for organisations in tightly-regulated industries, or with high sensitivity to brand perception, such as pharmaceutical companies, banks and charities, consensus decision-making is less risky.

Majority rule risks errors of commission and alienating dissenting voices who won't then commit to the decided-on course of action, whereas consensus risks errors of omission and low-decision velocity. Of course, between the extremes of majority rule and consensus lies a graduated spectrum of decision-making styles.
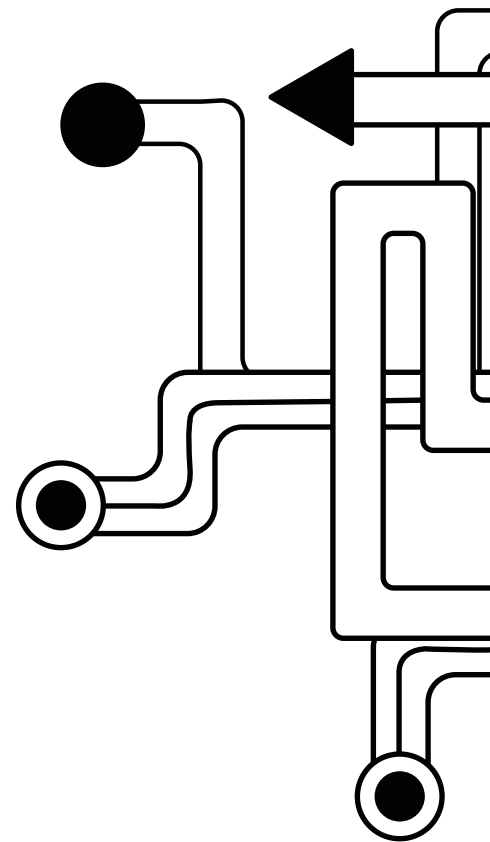
[16] sloanreview.mit.edu/article/when-consensus-hurts-the-company

▌Consent

In *Many Voices One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy*, Ted J. Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez describe an organisational model based on egalitarianism and collaborative decision-making where power is distributed throughout the organisation and where everyone's needs matter equally. In the book, they outline a method for determining the right course of action called 'decision-making by consent':

"

Consent is the default decision-making method in sociocracy. Consent means that if I make a proposal to the group, my proposal will be approved if no one in the group has an objection to it.[17]

The authors describe consent at length but it can perhaps best be summed up as a more rigidly-defined form of consensus decision-making—since group members who do not object to a proposal can presumably live with the outcome—and one which can morph into other decision-making styles if the group consents to it. However, using the consent method has some preconditions:

- The decision-making group has to be willing and able to resolve objections through, if necessary lengthy, discussion. Rau and Koch-Gonzalez warn that shortcutting the process too often can result in inequality emerging between group members which leads to frustration.

- The group has to align around a common aim. Valid objections can only be weighed against a clearly-defined purpose.

- Group membership must be defined, since in order to gain everyone's consent, you have to know whose consent is required.

- Group members cannot give consent in absentia.

Decision-making by consent isn't appropriate for all decisions—for example, those which rely on individual preferences, such as some design choices where objections cannot be based on reason—but in such scenarios the consent method can be used to determine another style of decision-making e.g. delegating to a single individual or putting it to a vote.
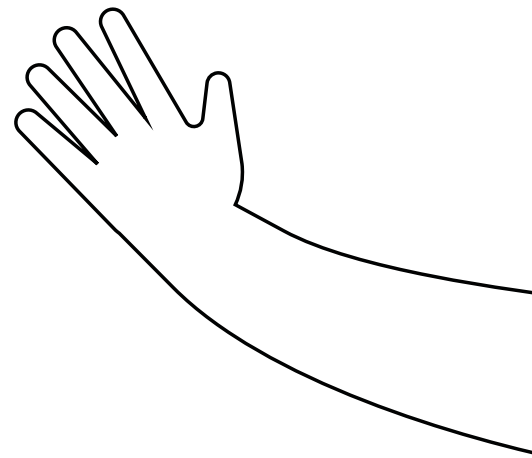
[17] www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/39462406-many-voices-one-song

▌Advice

Before describing the 'advice process' for decision-making, as described in Frederic Laloux's 2014 book *Reinventing Organizations*, it's probably wise to unpack the author's system of colour-coded evolutionary stages of organisational development. Laloux, synthesising insight from thinkers from Abraham Maslow (hierarchy of needs) to Ken Wilber (integral theory), contends that human consciousness has evolved through several distinct stages since the dawn of homo sapiens and that each stage has ushered in a new way of organising large groups of people to get things done. Clan-like Red Organisations were bad at planning and strategy but could react quickly to new threats and opportunities; Amber Organisations established rigid hierarchies and the ability to plan for the medium and long term; Orange Organisations brought with them innovation, accountability and meritocracy; Green Organisations empower frontline workers with decision-making authority, have a culture that is driven by a purpose and values, and feel responsible not just to shareholders but to a much wider group of stakeholders.

The next step in the evolution of the organisation is the Teal Organisation, which is already emerging in diverse industries and sectors around the world. Organisations which exemplify the Teal model abolish hierarchy altogether in favour of a system based on self management. They invite people to bring their whole selves to the workplace instead of playing a narrowly-defined role. And, instead of a fixed aim, they provide room for their purpose to evolve over time.

It is in this context that we can understand the 'advice process' for decision-making:

"

Almost all [Teal Organisations] use, in one form or another, a practice that AES called the 'advice process'. It is very simple: in principle, any person in the organization can make any decision. But before doing so, that person must seek advice from all affected parties and people with expertise on the matter.[18]

One of the key processes which underpins the self-management paradigm is: the advice process does away with the need to look up to the next level in a hierarchy for permission to make a decision. Instead, it empowers everyone in an organisation with decision-making authority, provided they consult with anyone who has an interest in the matter.

According to Laloux, the advice process neatly resolves the tension between consensus and unilateral styles of decision-making: "the agony of putting all decisions to consensus is avoided, and yet everybody with a stake has been given a voice; people have the freedom to seize opportunities and make decisions and yet must take into account other people's voices."

By drawing in anyone with a stake in the issue, the advice process is naturally inclusive and provides for a diversity of voices feeding into the decision. It forces the decision maker into a position of humility, demands that they get closely acquainted with all aspects of the question, and encourages them to work closely with those giving advice, fostering greater community and collaboration within the organisation.

In a fully realised Teal organisation, the advice process would operate in an entirely peer-based system free of hierarchy. But in one of the case studies in *Reinventing Organizations*, Fortune 500 global power company AES, aspects of traditional hierarchies remain, in the form of management layers, executive committees etc. And yet, the advice process manages to transcend these pyramid-like structures and allow anyone in the company to initiate any decision without the fear of being overruled by 'higher ups'.

Rather than producing weak, hands-off leaders, the advice process ensures that leaders get better information - because it isn't vetted and filtered as it moves up the different layers in the organisation. It also frees them up to focus on leadership rather than mediation:

"

In traditional organizations, senior leaders must do the hard work of integrating conflicting perspectives into a decision; because this process takes time, senior leaders become the bottlenecks for decision-making. With the advice process, they can ask tough questions and give their opinions forcefully, but then move on to the next question; meanwhile, someone else will do the work of integrating different perspectives and advice.

"

The agony of putting all decisions to consensus is avoided, and yet everybody with a stake has been given a voice; people have the freedom to seize opportunities and make decisions and yet must take into account other people's voices.

Reinventing Organizations
Frederic Laloux

RAPID

In their attempt to develop a practical tool for allocating decision roles, global management consultancy Bain & Company came up with the RAPID method. In *Decide and Deliver*, Bain partners Marcia W. Blenko, Michael C. Mankins and Paul Rogers describe the RAPID method as "a new way of looking at decisions and a new language for discussing them."[19]

An acronym, the letters that make up RAPID each represent a different role that a person or group plays in the decision-making process: recommend, agree, perform, input and decide. In this model, the person in the **recommend** role drives the process, gathering the relevant data and opinions and coming up with the alternative courses of action from which to choose. This needs to be a person who is credible both in the eyes of the final decision maker and in the eyes of the people inputting data into the process.

The people in the **input** role provide the relevant facts along with their subjective opinions based on the experience they hold. As in the advice process detailed above, the recommender is obliged to take all input into account but is not obliged to act on it.

The people in the **agree** role have a veto over the final decision. These are the people who have to sign off on the recommendation before it can be put into action. Bain & Co. stress that the agreers should use their veto sparingly, only nixing recommendations that are impossible or which conflict with the company's agenda elsewhere. They're not being asked to decide which course of action should be taken.

The **decide** role should be given to one person only to ensure a single point of accountability. To make high-quality decisions, this person should have good information, good judgement, and a good understanding of the group who will be tasked with executing any recommendation.

Finally, the **perform** role is taken by the individual or group who will have to carry out the recommendation. Bain & Co. stresses that this role is essential to get right, "since a good decision executed quickly often beats a brilliant decision executed poorly or slowly". They also suggest that there may be some overlap between the Input and Perform roles, since the latter will have good insight into the practicality of each recommendation.

R Recommend

A Agree

P Perform

I Input
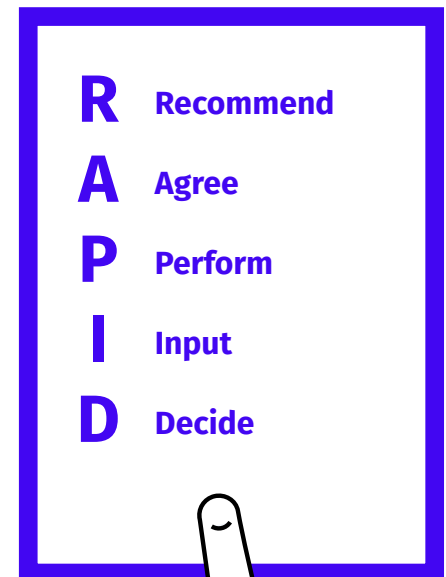
D Decide

[19] www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/8751656-decide-and-deliver

02

02

How to communicate your decisions more effectively

In *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink, the author draws on decades of scientific research on human motivation to uncover the three central elements of what makes people tick: autonomy, or the desire to direct our own lives; mastery, or the urge to get better and better at doing something; and purpose, or the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves.[20] The implications for decision makers are clear: to bring people with you on the journey of execution that follows any decision, it must satisfy their needs for autonomy and purpose.

To serve autonomy, they'll ideally have been involved in the decision-making process in some capacity. We looked at some decision-making methods in Part 1 that promote this kind of inclusion, in particular the advice process. If all the people affected by a decision can't be involved in making the decision for whatever reason, they should at least be provided with insight into how the decision was made; a recent survey by Slack found that 80% of workers want to know more about how decisions are made in their organisation.[21] But regardless of the decision-making methodology employed, to serve the need for purpose, at a minimum they have to understand how the decision aligns with the organisation's vision and how, in helping execute the decision, they will be contributing to the larger purpose.
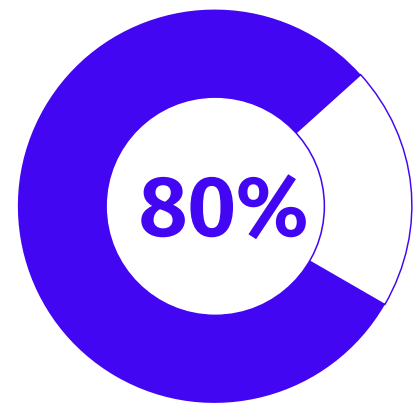
80% of workers want to know more about how decisions are made in their organisation.[21]

[20] www.goodreads.com/book/show/6452796-drive
[21] slackhq.com/trust-tools-and-teamwork-what-workers-want

Establish a shared vision

According to Peter M. Senge of MIT Sloan School of Management, author of the hugely influential *Fifth Discipline*, organisations that want to be able to transform and adapt to a rapidly changing world must become learning organisations. There are five disciplines that a learning organisation must master, including systems thinking, mental models, team learning and personal mastery.[22] But the first, and arguably the most important, is establishing a shared vision.

Too often, the desire for forward-looking leadership in an organisation translates into a belief by leaders that they need to be visionary. But this not only places an undue burden on the prescience of leaders, it also results in visions that are particular to an individual and which are rarely capable of being communicated to, or inspiring, the rest of the organisation. As we've seen from the Teal paradigm, and the importance of autonomy and purpose to motivation, visions handed down from on high won't fly in an age that is moving away from top-down, command-and-control management styles.

Instead, to harness the yearning of staff to work in service of something larger than themselves, leaders should engage the entire organisation in a process of building a shared vision. By encouraging people to share their experiences and opinions, leaders can build trust, and promote collaboration. A shared vision provides a yardstick against which all future decisions can be measured and a ready framework through which they can be communicated throughout the organisation.

Since any major decision should support the organisation in pursuit of this shared vision, it is easy to see how the same process could be employed for communicating the decision throughout the organisation.

Female leadership network Ellevate provides an 11-step process for building a shared vision, as outlined on the next page.
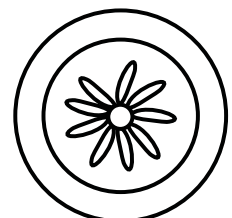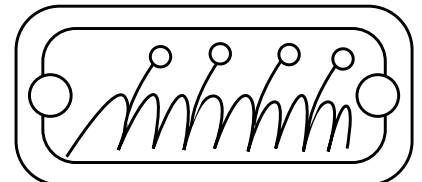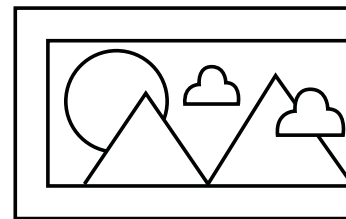
[22] www.goodreads.com/book/show/255127.The_Fifth_Discipline

11-step process for building a shared vision

01 **Decide who should be involved.** As well as your own employees, this might include groups or representatives of other key stakeholders.

02 **Schedule collaborative working time.** Off-site locations minimise interruptions, get people away from their day-to-day environment and stimulate creativity.

03 **Assign a neutral facilitator for the meeting(s).** Taking the focus off leaders and allowing them to participate.

04 **Schedule meetings well in advance.** Send out important documents for people to review and set an expectation that they will come prepared.

05 **Set the stage.** Establish ground rules, agenda, process, and desired outcomes at the beginning of the meeting(s).

06 **Create a plan and use a process.** To ensure full participation, openness, creativity, and efficiency you might engage a trained facilitator to help you design this.

07 **Write the vision statement later.** Don't waste collaborative working time arguing over the exact wording of the vision statement.

08 **Talk privately to those who disagree.** There may still be an opportunity to explore ways to connect the vision to the interests and needs of anyone who is disappointed by the outcome.

09 **Reconvene the group.** Hold a shorter meeting once the vision statement has been drafted. Solicit input and make changes.

10 **Review the draft with key colleagues who were not at the meeting.** Use this time to get input, improve it, and begin to build a broader coalition of support.

11 **Start communicating the vision.** Making your vision a reality requires a partnership with some of your most creative employees. They'll help bring the vision to life in a way that inspires, perhaps using images, metaphors, and stories.[23]

[23] www.ellevatenetwork.com/articles/7542-11-steps-to-creating-a-shared-vision-for-your-team

Case Study

Building an audience-centred digital strategy

The NSPCC needed help navigating a period of digital transformation, benchmarking their progress, and supporting the wider organisation in a shared vision, to understand their audiences, optimise content and confidently deliver supporter journeys.

After immersing themselves in the NSPCC's strategy, research and ways of working, the team from Manifesto devised a series of research and collaboration initiatives. Workshops, user research and analysis—including a large user survey and a series of depth interviews with stakeholders yielded a new set of eight digital content personas, a new user-centred information architecture and a content strategy comprising content principles, an easy-to-use content prism and training for the charity's content creators.

We also devised a bespoke benchmarking framework to help the NSPCC communicate to wider teams, what digital excellence looks like and identify four key enablers with concrete recommendations for embracing and implementing digital.

The digital benchmarking report is helping NSPCC to accelerate digital transformation and formulate a new long-term organisational strategy, where digital is woven into organisational aims and objectives.

"

I am delighted with the quality of input and output from the Manifesto team who through proactive collaboration and smart processes learned quickly about our multifunctional teams and priorities and built rapport and confidence. We feel better equipped to deliver compelling relevant effective content that provides value to our different audiences thanks to the quality work we have done together.

Clive Gardiner
Head of Digital, NSPCC

Use storytelling techniques

Of course, communicating a shared vision throughout an organisation, as well as how major decisions will help the organisation towards that vision, requires that every member can make sense of the organisation, its history, and their place within the picture. A difficult task but one which is made easier by one of our oldest technologies: storytelling. In the words of storytelling consultant and researcher Michael Kaye:

"

Stories can shape the culture of organizations. Through stories and myths, we can form images of the organization and judge whether it is healthy or ailing. They tell us about the people who are saving the organization and those who are bringing it down—myths support rituals, communicate values and help leaders envisage the future.[24]

Myth-making in organisations involves elevating your heroes and their successes to the status of legendary characters and their exploits. You can do this by selecting appropriate story templates, mapping your people onto them, and reinforcing them through repetition and embellishment.

According to Joseph Campbell, there is really only one basic story: the hero's journey.[25] While the variants on this tale can be categorised into an arbitrary number of 'basic plots' like The Quest, Overcoming the Monster, Voyage and Return, Rebirth etc, what they all have in common is change. During the course of the story, the hero affects a profound change either in the wider world or in themselves.
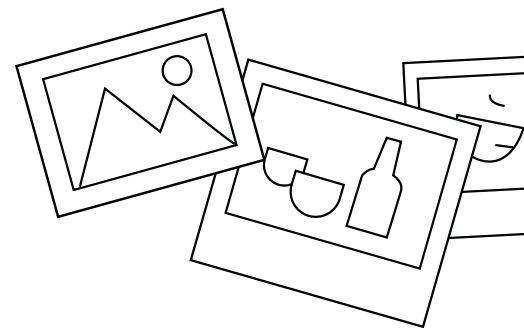
[24] business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/storytellingorg.html
[25] www.goodreads.com/book/show/588138.The_Hero_With_a_Thousand_Faces

David M. Boje, author of *Storytelling Organizations*, defines an organisational story as "a tale about a person caught in one situation unfolding from start to climax to resolution."[26] He points to seven crucial aspects you need to consider to be an effective organisational storyteller:

Character

Who are the characters in the story?

Plot

How do the characters act? How do these acts form plots and storylines? Are those plots tragic, romantic, comedic? How do different people or organizations possess different plots?

Theme

What is the problem, conflict or dilemma at the heart of your story?

Dialogue

Believable dialogues come from the voice of experience. Find your voice and dialogue with other stakeholders.

Rhythm

Organizations have multiple storytellers, telling simultaneous stories in multiple spaces. Together they possess a collective rhythm.

Spectacle

How do the characters look, dress, move? How can the scene be set spectacularly?

Frame

What are their ideas/ attitudes/points of view?[27]

You can play around with the traditional beginning-middle-end story structure to support your purposes: "Start in the middle if you want a living story. Start at the beginning if you want a narrative. Start in the future if you want to lead."

Using storytelling techniques doesn't just help you disseminate your shared vision and related decisions throughout the organisation. Their value in marketing activities is obvious, but they can also help the people composing the story gain a better understanding of how different issues within the organisation are interconnected and how decisions might impact other stakeholders.

[26] www.goodreads.com/book/show/7578891-storytelling-organizations
[27] business.nmsu.edu/~dboje/503/how_to_tell_a_story.htm

Each year at Manifesto we set Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) for the areas we're focusing on and aiming to push forward. If left without a narrative these can feel dry and meaningless so it's important to build the story around them.

Manifesto CEO Jim Bowes says:

"

It's important that the issues we've prioritised above all others to focus on for the year are meaningful to everyone in the organisation so we always wrap them in the narrative of why an objective is important, the difference it can make and what it could mean for our shared future. We also aim to show how it links to what people have been telling us is important. I see my role in developing vision and OKRs about hearing the heartbeat and thoughts of everyone across the business, working with my team to consider external factors and codifying it as opposed to being the sole originator of what's most important.

As Jeff Bezos said in an internal Amazon email in 2004 on the requirement that all senior executive meetings begin with reading a six-page memo rather than sitting through presentation: "The narrative structure of a good memo forces better thought and better understanding of what's more important than what, and how things are related. PowerPoint-style presentations somehow give permission to gloss over ideas, flatten out any sense of relative importance, and ignore the interconnectedness of ideas."[28]

[28] www.businessinsider.com/jeff-bezos-email-against-powerpoint-presentations-2015-7

Invite difficult conversations

As we've seen from studying group effects on decision-making effectiveness, human beings have evolved with hard-wired social instincts which make us care about what others think of us. This can be unhelpful in the modern organisation when it stops people bringing to light information that could be useful, for fear of looking bad or hurting the feelings of another. When trying to bring people together behind a particular decision, it's helpful to know when and why people have reservations or objections. Even if they can't be incorporated into the new direction, they can at least be acknowledged in your communications (i.e. figure as themes in your story) so that people feel that their concerns have been heard.

> **"**
>
> **…how information is communicated to employees during a change matters more than what information is communicated. A lack of audience empathy when conveying news about an organizational transformation can cause it to fail.**[29]
>
> **Patti Sanchez**
> Communications Consultant

But overriding people's instinct to keep their heads down and their sentiments to themselves requires more than simply arranging the odd 'town hall'-style meeting or sending out occasional anonymous surveys. People will offer candid feedback when they feel safe, and that means establishing a culture which continuously produces the right social cues.

[29] hbr.org/2018/12/the-secret-to-leading-organizational-change-is-empathy

The Future Charity Report

The Future Charity Report, based on extensive surveys of charity employees, in-depth interviews and discussions with charity leaders, aims to pinpoint the source of the fears hindering the charity sector and suggests practical approaches to overcome them.

One of the highlighted enablers that came out of the findings of the report was building confidence. Making brave, bold choices to enable transformation necessarily comes with risk attached. It also requires a huge effort to bring everyone along with you. Discussions with charity leaders suggested the following solutions:

- **Finding the right people for leadership roles**
  Charities can do more to attract experienced agents of change from a wider variety of backgrounds, instead of just defaulting to the restricted talent pool that already exists within the sector.

- **Coaching and mentoring**
  To address the skill and confidence gap that exists in leadership positions, charities could provide coaching and mentoring for those who need it. Mentors should bring outside experience wherever possible.

- **Build appetite for risk at board level**
  Trustees have an important role to play, since their appetite for risk determines how bold and brave leadership can be. Now is the time to reassess policies and attitudes to risk management.

- **Ring fence resources for innovation**
  Successful innovation requires failure. Resources should be set aside for conducting experiments where no immediate return on investment is expected.

- **Cross sector support forums**
  The charity sector must build better support networks to combat the isolation of leaders, and help them share knowledge and experience of operating effectively within the charity governance structure.

Read more:
The Future Charity Report
First steps to address these solutions can be found in the full report.

Case Study

Gaining project efficiencies with expert coaching

Manifesto partnered with Christian Aid, one of the UK's largest charities, to help them transform how they make decisions, engage audiences and deliver projects globally.

We worked as an extension of their leadership team to help deliver a focused and cohesive change programme that's helped the organisation to deliver measurable improvements across a number of strategically important areas, including user experience, product management, digital marketing, analytics and insight, and innovation.

To support recommended improvements resulting from comprehensive audits, Manifesto provided coaching and project management training to Christian Aid's Development Team and Digital Leadership, so they could maximise efficiencies and become more confident with the future delivery of projects. To do this, the team collaborated on the creation of a product roadmap, created a prioritisation framework, defined principles around backlog management and redefined the teams roles and responsibilities.

Read more:
Accelerating digital ways of working

▌Build psychological safety

In *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups*, author Daniel Coyle uses the concept of belonging cues to introduce psychological safety. Belonging cues, subtle signals that predate language in human behaviour, and that tell us that we can stop worrying about threats and shift into connection mode, possess three basic qualities:

1. **Energy:** They invest in the exchange that is occurring;

2. **Individualisation:** They treat the person as unique and valued;

3. **Future orientation:** They signal the relationship will continue.[30]

Unfortunately, building safety isn't the kind of leadership skill that can be picked up overnight. It requires dialling into very subtle social signals and delivering the right cues at the right time. Based on research conducted at MIT and Harvard, Coyle provides a number of tips for getting started:

Overcommunicate your listening
Be mindful of your posture and expression, avoid interrupting the speaker.

Spotlight your fallibility
Phrases like "I might be wrong here" or "This is just my opinion" show you acknowledge that you can make mistakes and invites input.

Embrace the messenger
Don't just tolerate bad news; let the person communicating it know how valuable their input is.

Preview future connection
Making references to the future of your (successful) relationship helps listeners connect the dots between the current situation and desirable outcomes.

Overdo thank-yous
Voicing appreciation frequently affirms relationships and ignites cooperative behaviour.

> "
> The key to creating psychological safety, as Pentland [MIT Human Dynamics Lab] and Edmonson [Professor of Leadership and Management at the Harvard Business School] emphasize, is to recognise how deeply obsessed our unconscious brains are with it. A mere hint of belonging is not enough; one or two signals are not enough. We are built to require lots of signalling, over and over.
>
> *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups*
> **Daniel Coyle**

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[30] www.goodreads.com/book/show/33517721-the-culture-code

Create safe, collision-rich spaces
Whether it's a cafeteria, break-out areas, coffee machines or water coolers, design areas where people can have high-quality conversations and encounters.

Make sure everyone has a voice
Implement mechanisms that encourage people to share. Rituals like daily stand ups, regular retrospectives and one-on-one meetings allow leaders to seek out connection and ensure voices are heard.

At Manifesto we have a physical 'Super' stand up for the whole company in our London studio, with the ability for remote workers and those in other locations to dial in. We keep this structured and limit open-ended discussion. It's an effective way for team members to voice project success, and also where they require support from the wider team.

A method that we use for people to share thoughts anonymously is post-it walls. We invite the team to add their thoughts about topics via post-it notes at a time that is convenient to them. This feedback is then gathered, and reviewed by our Leadership Team.

Pick up trash
Seek simple ways to serve the group—picking up litter, allocating office space in an egalitarian way, pay for group meals, provide for equity in (startup) salaries.

Make the most of threshold moments
Mark the moment when a new starter joins the team as special.

Avoid giving sandwich feedback
Instead of the positive-negative-positive feedback technique, which can cause confusion, handle negatives with two-way dialogue, and positives with emphatic bursts of recognition and praise.

Embrace fun
Because laughter is one of the most powerful safety cues.

> **"**
> **Create a shared understanding of the nature of the work we do and why everyone's input matters… It means acknowledging out loud that by their nature our systems can compound mistakes, and unless we do everything with interpersonal awareness and focus, things can go wrong.**
>
> **Amy Edmondson** of Harvard highlighting the importance of setting the stage for psychological safety.

▍Foster vulnerability in leadership

The top-down, command-and-control paradigm has provided us with an archetype of the leader who is always smarter, wiser and more confident than their subordinates, and who never needs help. This leadership style could be harmful even when rigidly-hierarchical organisations were adaptive, but in an age of purpose-driven Green organisations and evolutionary Teal organisations, it can be downright toxic.

Even in 1990, when business classic *The Fifth Discipline* was written, this paradigm was being challenged, as the book urges leaders to develop the quality of 'reflective openness'—reflection and self-inquiry—as a response to the truth revealed by systems thinking that we seldom have all the information, or information-processing ability, available to us to make the correct decision. But recent thought leaders, like Brené Brown and Daniel Coyle, have been advocating for a leadership quality grounded more in the emotional body than the intellectual mind, and thus much more in keeping with the Teal-paradigm characteristic of wholeness: vulnerability.
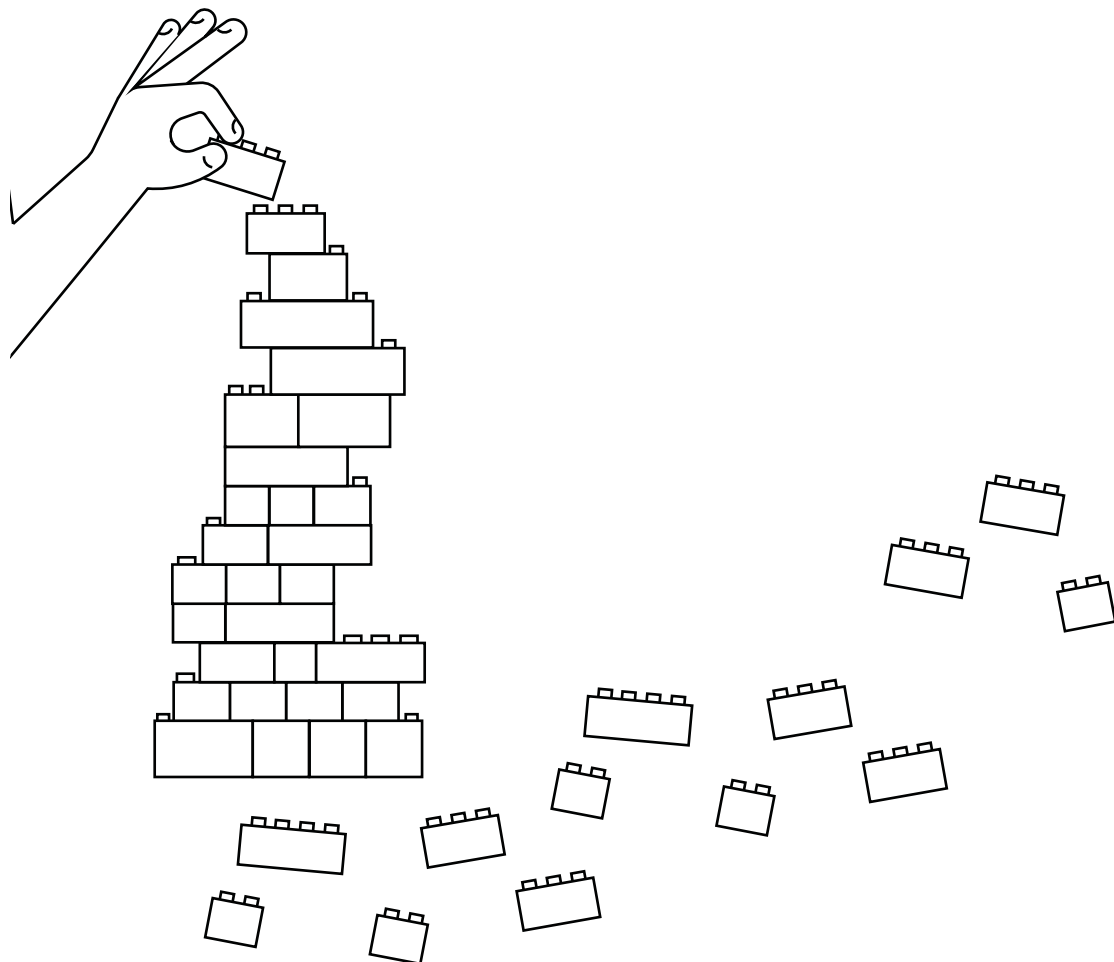
As Frederic Laloux concludes in *Reinventing Organizations*, vulnerability and strength are not opposites, but different polarities of a leader that reinforce one another:

" CEOs that role-model virtues such as humility, trust, courage, candor, vulnerability, and authenticity invite colleagues to take the same risks. When Jos de Blok [of Buurtzorg] decided to change the principle for calculating overtime without seeking advice and then publicly acknowledged his mistake, he turned a blunder into a public display of vulnerability and humility. Jean-François Zobrist showed similar humility at FAVI when, from the top of a soapbox, he told his assembled colleagues he didn't know how to solve a thorny problem and he needed their help.[31]

As Daniel Coyle writes, vulnerability sparks cooperation and trust among teams, and good leaders will be vulnerable first and often. Quoting Laszlo Bock of People Analytics at Google, he relates three questions that leaders should ask of their people:

- What is one thing I currently do that you'd like me to continue to do?

- What is one thing that I don't currently do frequently enough that you think I should do more often?

- What can I do to make you more effective?

Signalling vulnerability not only produces an empathetic response in your listeners, but also demonstrates that you work in service of the organisation's greater purpose, and are willing to set aside ego and endure discomforting conversations to serve that purpose. This is a powerful way to role-model the organisation's values and bring people along with you on a journey of change.

[31] www.goodreads.com/book/show/20787425-reinventing-organizations

"

The affirmative decision that organisations need to create lasting changes across the not-for-profit sector, will provide the right platform for driving sustainable change. Organisations have such an important role to play within the ecosystem of society, and to ensure we're evolving with the needs around us, we need to have a lens of change. Manifesto believe transformation, change and growth will be the enablers for this, and we can support organisations on this journey.

Louise Lai
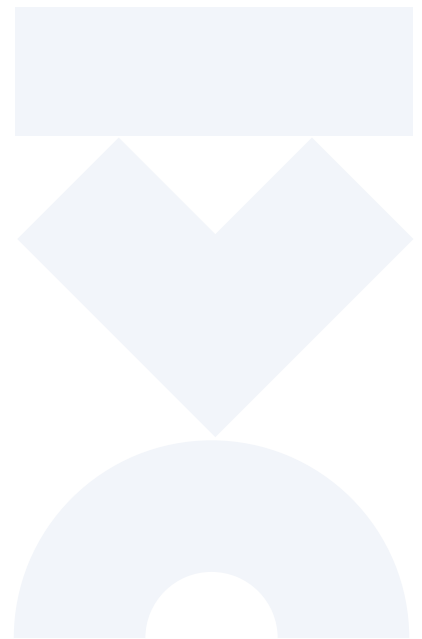Transformation Director, Manifesto
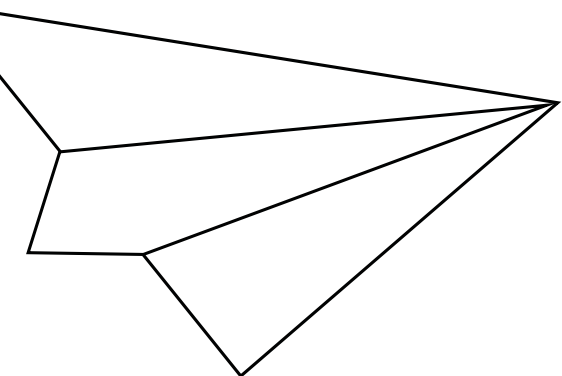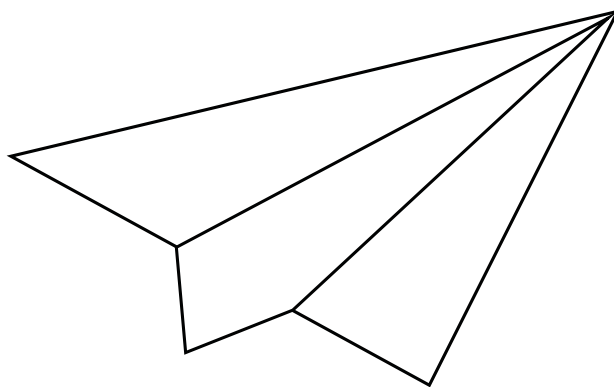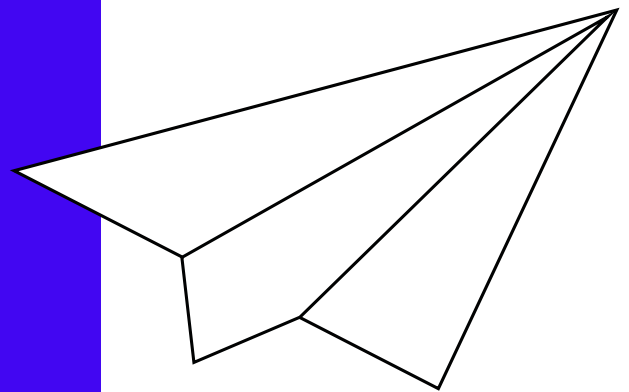
Conclusion

This paper is divided into two sections to reflect that fact that most organisations today are still run along hierarchical lines, with a decision-making class of leaders that communicates its decisions to a wider decision-implementing class of employees. Ultimately, the changing nature of commerce in the 21st century will drive a shift towards fully-decentralised decision-making, where everyone affected by a decision is involved in the process, and where the acts of making the decision and communicating it to the wider organisation merge into a single, integrated process.

But while such visions of a 'Teal' future may seem unreachable for those working within command-and-control structures, their basis in psychological research and behavioural dynamics do offer up practical pointers on how to begin the transition.

The journey of making your decision-making processes more robust should proceed from an uncomfortable truth: that even the most incisive minds are incapable of weighing all the variables involved in most organisational decisions, and are beset by cognitive biases that distort facts to fit more emotionally-palatable narratives. Groups can also succumb to these biases, but more diverse groups offer up more and higher-quality input to the decision-maker, whose role should always be well defined and whose interests should be aligned to those who are responsible for executing the decision.

Communicating decisions, and bringing people with you on a journey of change, requires the skills of a proficient storyteller, empathetic listener and courageous leader. The backdrop against which your story is set is the organisation's vision, which should be a shared vision rather than one handed down from higher up in the organisation. Inviting people to give themselves over to this story, and imagine themselves in leading roles, demands a demonstration that leadership is willing to do the same, by building a culture of psychological safety where people feel free to speak their minds, and by showing vulnerability in service of the same overarching purpose.

Designing organisations, products and services for the 21st century

Manifesto deliver systemic change, supporting transformations across organisational design, fundraising, change programmes, service design and technology. We collaborate with organisations across the not-for-profit, social enterprise and culture sectors, supporting them through strategic, cultural and operational change.

If your organisation is gearing up to embark on a change programme then please get in touch, we'd love to discuss how we can partner with you, and collaborate on the delivery of your change programme.
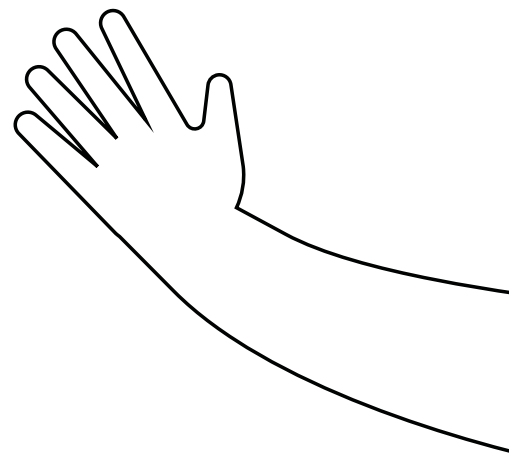
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> **I've worked with the not-for-profit sector for over a decade and at the moment charities face some huge challenges. In the coming years, with growing societal need, changing giving behaviours, legacy technology platforms and 20th century ways of working; we have to do more to support transformation in the sector.**
>
> **Jim Bowes**
> CEO, Manifesto

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