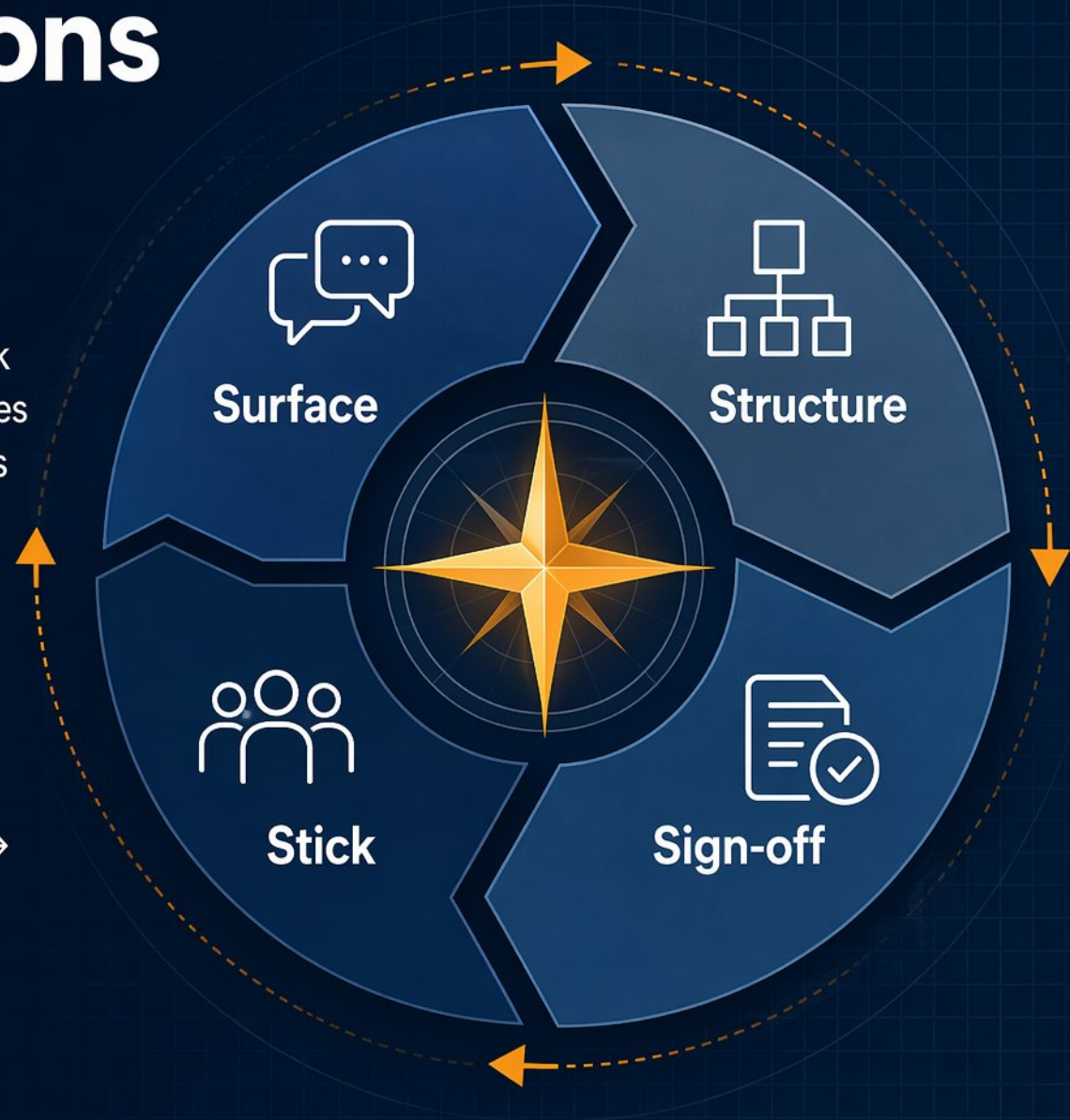


# Making Decisions as a Team

- Team decision-making is the critical bottleneck for project outcomes in 2026; when AI generates options faster than ever, the deciding process becomes the competitive advantage.
- Common failure modes: consensus drag, ambiguity in ownership, analysis paralysis, the HiPPO effect, and the Abilene paradox.
- This training covers a repeatable, four-phase framework: Surface → Structure → Sign-off → Stick, delivering clear ownership, explicit trade-offs, and committed action.
- The goal is not universal agreement, but a high-quality, defensible decision that everyone can commit to execute.



# The Hidden Cost of Bad Team Decisions

- **37%** of employees regularly agree with decisions they privately oppose
- **Groupthink:** suppressing dissent for harmony
- **Abilene Paradox:** agreeing to what no one wants
- **Analysis Paralysis:** endless data gathering, no decision
- **HiPPO Effect:** deferring to the highest-paid opinion



**Groupthink:**  
suppressing  
dissent for harmony



**Abilene Paradox:**  
agreeing to what  
no one wants



**Analysis Paralysis:**  
endless data  
gathering, no decision



**HiPPO Effect:**  
deferring to the  
highest-paid opinion

# The Team Decision Spectrum: From Unilateral to Consensus



- Five modes: Unilateral, Consultative, Consensus, Consent, Disagree-and-Commit



- Match mode to decision: speed vs. buy-in, reversible vs. irreversible



- Meta-decision: name the decision rule before the discussion starts



- Single-mode defaults create bottlenecks (consensus) or erode trust (unilateral)

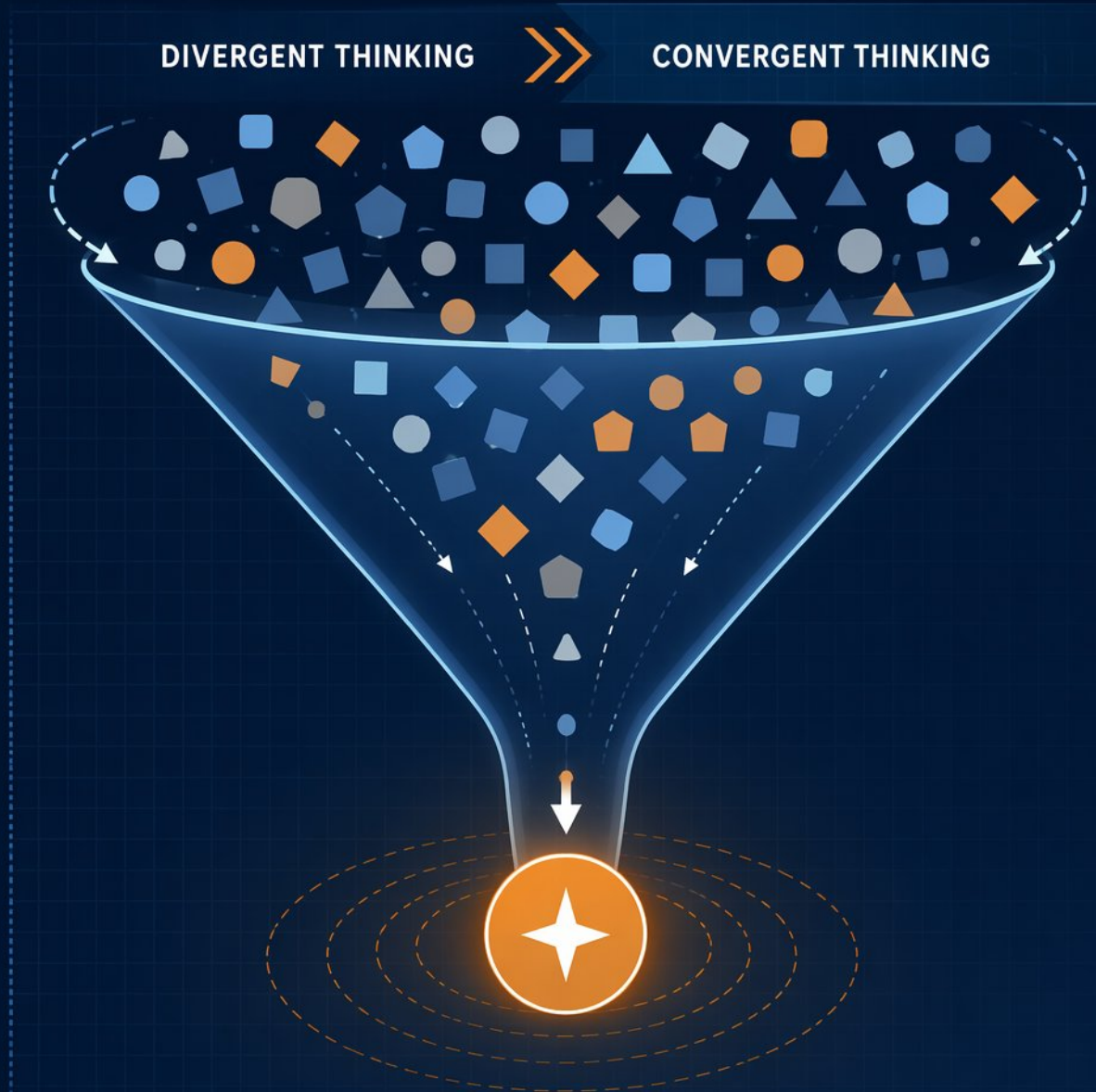
# Defining Clear Ownership with RAPID and DACI

- ✓ Use RAPID® (Recommend, Agree, Perform, Input, Decide) or DACI to clarify roles before any decision
- ✓ Assign one Decider/Approver per decision — this alone stops committee drift and HiPPO defaults
- ✓ Reserve the Agree role for legal, regulatory, or non-negotiable requirements, not general veto
- ✓ Assign roles by expertise, not hierarchy; document them transparently to prevent ambiguity

| DECISION                                                                                                       | <b>R</b><br>RECOMMEND<br>(Recommend)                                                | <b>A</b><br>AGREE<br>(Agree)                                                         | <b>P</b><br>PERFORM<br>(Perform)                                                      | <b>I</b><br>INPUT<br>(Input)                                                          | <b>D</b><br>DECIDE<br>(Decide)                                                        | <b>C</b><br>CONTRIBUTE<br>(DACI)                                                      | <b>A</b><br>APPROVE<br>(DACI)                                                         | <b>I</b><br>INFORM<br>(DACI)                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Define Strategy           |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| <br>Evaluate Options          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| <br>Assess Risk & Compliance |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <br>Approve Plan            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# Generating and Structuring Options

- ▶ Shift from divergent to convergent thinking to avoid the false dilemma trap
- ▶ Use silent writing and pre-mortems to surface unique, unbiased ideas
- ▶ Structure options as distinct, mutually exclusive, viable paths
- ▶ Explicitly include "do nothing" to counter status quo bias



# Making Trade-offs Explicit with a Decision Matrix



- A decision matrix replaces subjective debate with objective evaluation



- Build it: list options, define criteria, assign percentage weights



- Weighting criteria forces alignment on real business priorities



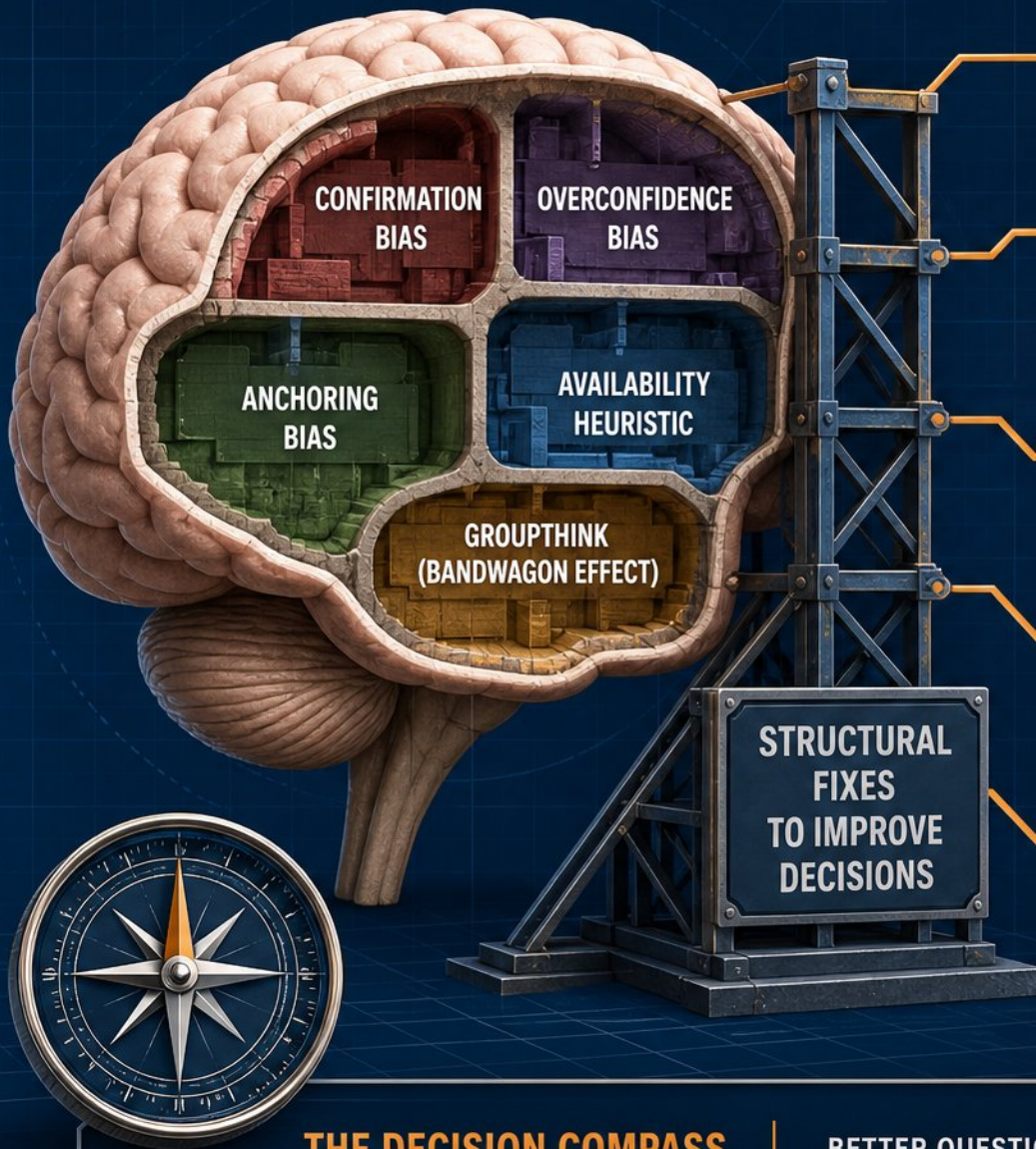
- Close scores signal a genuine judgment call, not a mandate



- Use it as a decision support tool, not a replacement for judgment

| CRITERIA                                                                                         | WEIGHT (%) | OPTIONS                                                                              |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                  |            | OPTION A                                                                             | OPTION B                                                                             | OPTION C                                                                             |
|  Criterion 1    |            |   |   |   |
|  Criterion 2    |            |   |   |   |
|  Criterion 3    |            |   |   |   |
|  Criterion 4   |            |  |  |  |
|  TOTAL WEIGHT |            |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |                                                                                      |

# Recognizing and Countering Cognitive Biases



- Surface unique info with written pre-inputs before discussion



- Senior leader speaks last to prevent the HiPPO effect



- Assign a rotating devil's advocate role with process permission



- Require disconfirming evidence: "strongest case against" per function



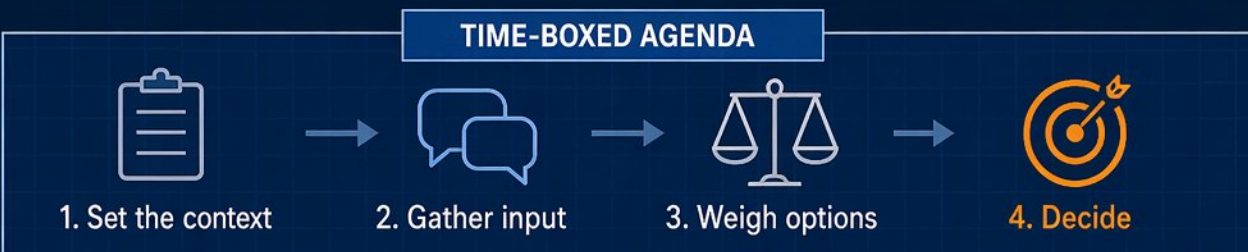
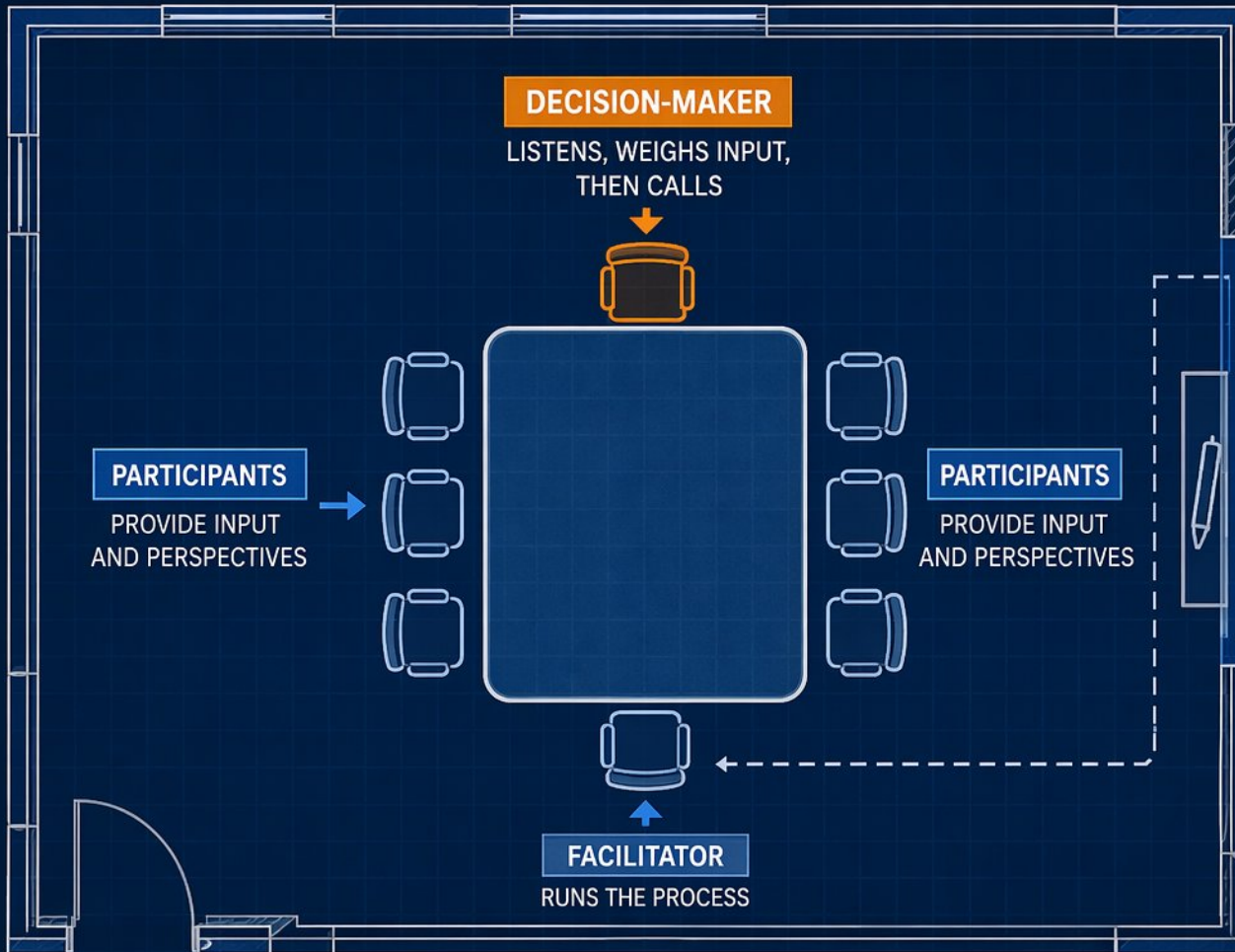
- Ask confidence ranges: "how sure are we?" and "what if we're wrong?"

**THE DECISION COMPASS**

BETTER QUESTIONS. STRONGER EVIDENCE. CLEARER DECISIONS.



# The Decision Meeting: Design and Facilitation



## KEY PRINCIPLES

- ✓ - Post decision question, options, and named decider 48 hours before meeting
- ✓ - Facilitator runs process; decision-maker listens, weighs input, then calls
- ✓ - Time-box ruthlessly: set a deadline, then commit to the best available option
- ✓ - Break deadlocks with disagree-and-commit, anonymous polls, or escalation

# Disagree and Commit:

## A Protocol for Action



- ▶ Voice dissent early, but commit fully once a decision is made
- ▶ Follow five steps: Propose → Disagree → Decide → Commit → Implement
- ▶ Genuine debate must precede commitment; otherwise, it's just unilateralism
- ▶ Speeds velocity by avoiding consensus traps and analysis paralysis
- ▶ Naysayers should work hardest to implement, so failure reveals the idea, not execution



# Communicating the Decision and Rationale



- The **Decision Record**: a one-screen receipt, not a recap — it binds the call



- Capture what was **decided**, **by whom**, **dissents**, **effective date**, and **revisit triggers**



- Tailor communication: **team** gets rationale and next steps; **leadership** gets risk profile



- **Procedural fairness**: people accept decisions when process is transparent and voice is heard

## THE DECISION RECEIPT

A ONE-SCREEN RECEIPT, NOT A RECAP —  
IT BINDS THE CALL



WHAT WAS DECIDED \_\_\_\_\_



BY WHOM \_\_\_\_\_



DISSENTS \_\_\_\_\_



EFFECTIVE DATE \_\_\_\_\_



REVISIT TRIGGERS \_\_\_\_\_

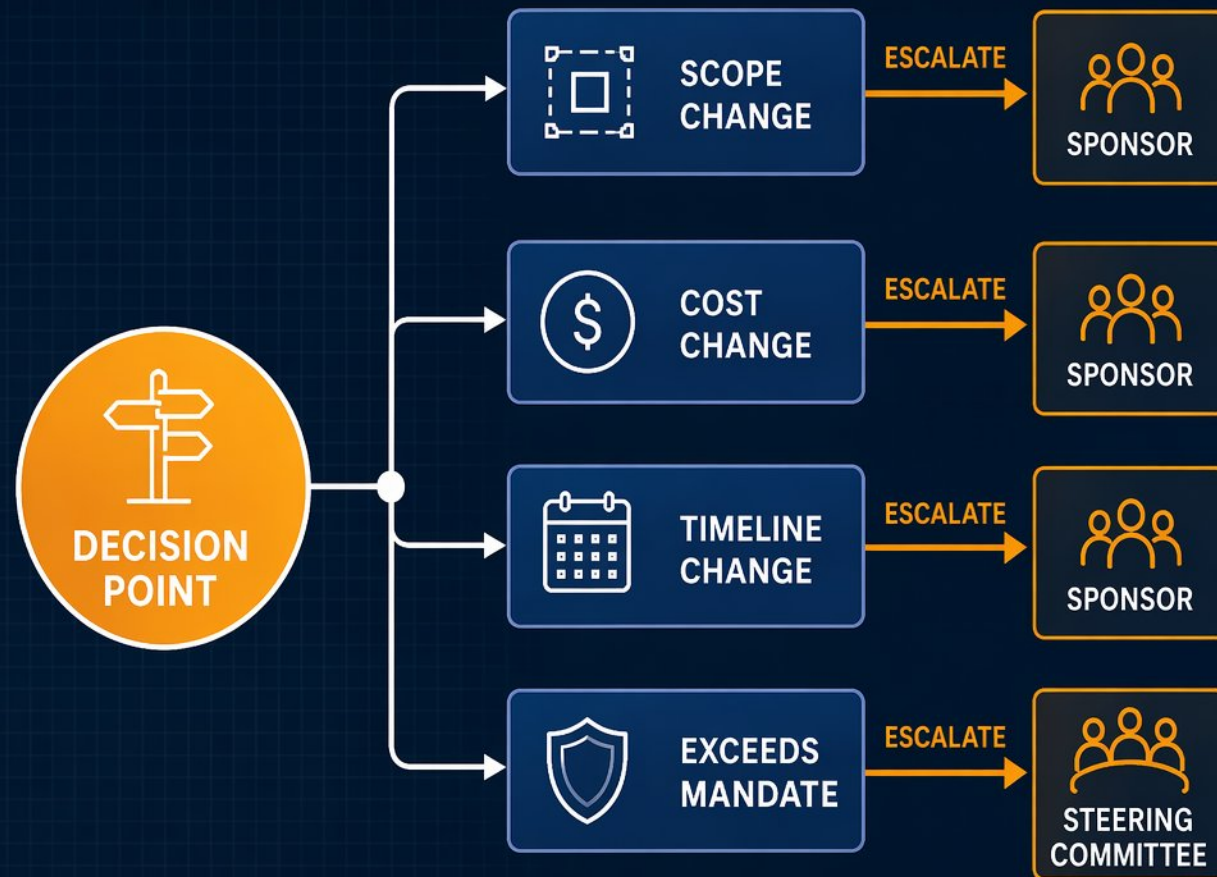
• THE RECEIPT ARTIFACT •

# Turning Decisions into Action

- Translate decisions into clear tasks, named owners, and deadlines
- Integrate into the backlog immediately; a decision is not real until it ships
- Use a decision log with statuses: proposed, decided, shipping, shipped, reversed
- Assign the Perform role early, not after the decision, to surface implementation issues



# Escalation Paths: When and How to Raise a Decision



- Escalate if scope, cost, or timeline change; irreversible; or exceeds mandate



- Over-escalation signals no trust; under-escalation creates governance gaps



- Define decision tiers at start: team, sponsor, steering committee



- Package the ask: recommendation, options, trade-offs, and a clear ask

## ESCALATION TIERS (SET AT START)



TEAM



SPONSOR



STEERING COMMITTEE

# Decision-Making in Distributed and Hybrid Teams

## SYNCHRONOUS MEETINGS



VS.

## ASYNCHRONOUS WRITTEN INPUT



Same time.  
Harder for all voices.



Any time.  
More voices included.

- Shift from synchronous meetings to shared, async written input
- Surface → Structure → Sign-off → Stick framework for remote teams
- Use default-if-nobody-objects to beat the slowest decider
- Avoid the hybrid trap: make the decision-maker remote-first
- Decision velocity = count of moved decisions, not meetings held

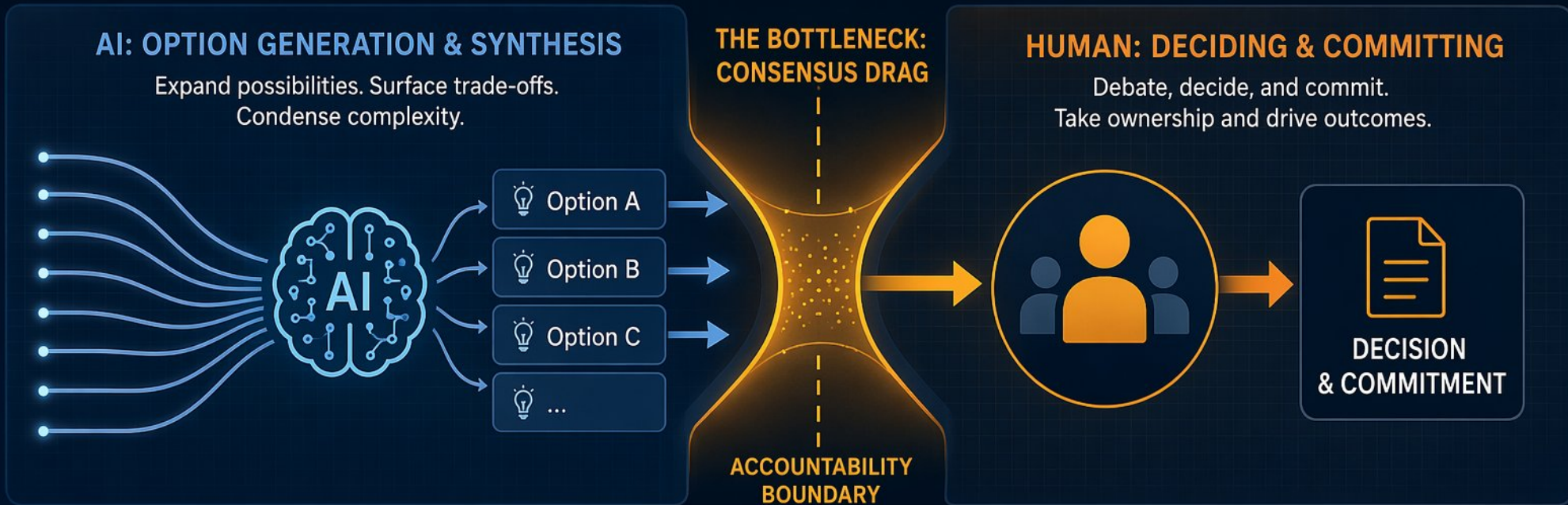
## THE SPECTRUM OF VOICES



HARDER TO HEAR

EASIER TO HEAR

# AI's Role in Team Decision-Making



- AI accelerates option generation, not the deciding – the bottleneck shifts to consensus drag



- Centralized AI knowledge improves accuracy; asymmetric AI knowledge breeds mistrust



- Keep AI in option-generation and synthesis; keep human captaincy in deciding and committing

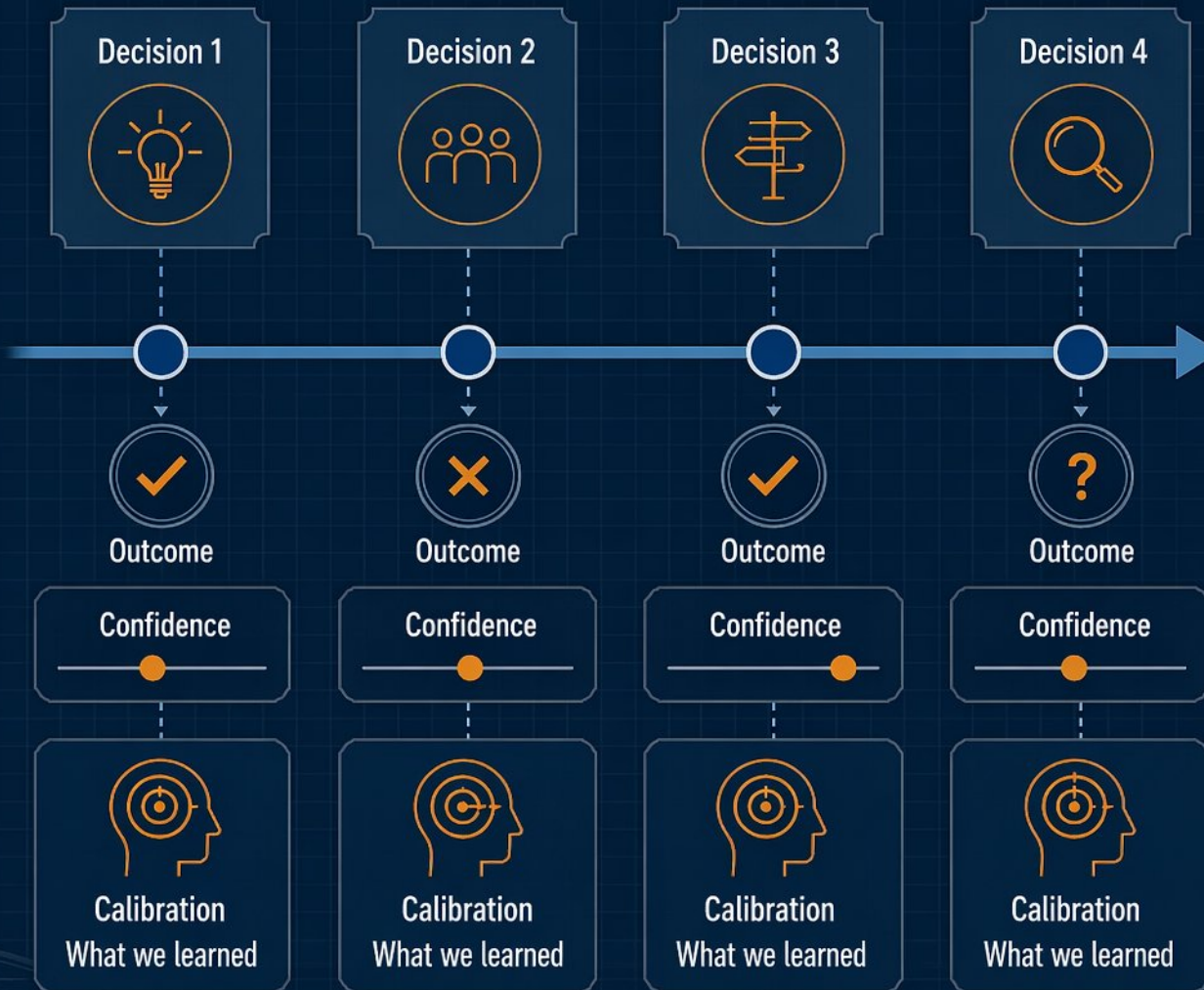


- AI-summarized meetings obscure who decided what – always pair with a human-authored receipt

# Reviewing and Learning from Past Decisions



THE DECISION COMPASS



- Evaluate reasoning quality, not just outcomes: separate good decisions from lucky ones



- Run decision audits: capture assumptions, confidence, and what actually happened



- Spot systemic biases: overconfidence, anchoring, or escalating failing projects



- Review decision logs quarterly; update criteria, roles, and escalation rules

# Your Team Decision Playbook: The 16-Page Summary



## Phase 1: Surface

- Phase 1: Surface — Frame as a binary question, list 2-4 options, name the decision-maker, post 48 hours ahead.



## Phase 2: Structure

- Phase 2: Structure — Assign RAPID/DACI roles, collect written input, use a decision matrix to make trade-offs explicit.



## Phase 3: Sign-off

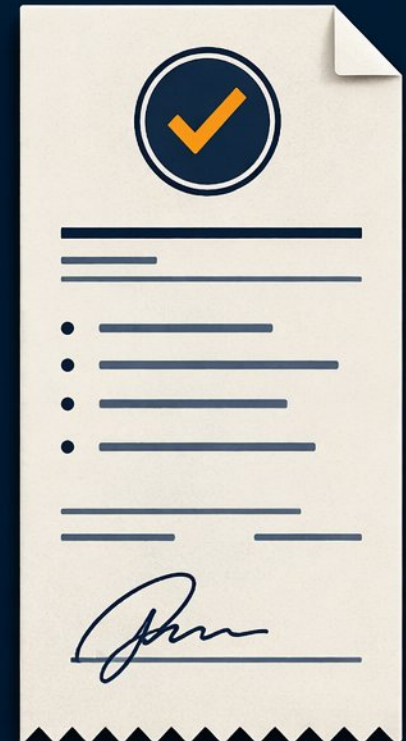
- Phase 3: Sign-off — The decision-maker makes the call, the team commits (Disagree and Commit if needed), and a one-page receipt is published.



## Phase 4: Stick

- Phase 4: Stick — Track every decision in a single source of truth, review weekly, and run decision retrospectives to improve.

### The Receipt Artifact



**Highest-leverage change:** name the decision rule and the decision-maker at minute one of every discussion.

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