CORE CONCEPT

Executive Decision-Making and Strategic Problem Solving for Leaders

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Technical depth: Conceptual · **Practical mode:** Case study

Introduction

Senior teams take decisions of growing consequence with incomplete data, compressed timelines and competing stakeholder interests. Poorly framed problems, unclear decision rights and unchecked bias lead to delayed choices, reversed commitments and avoidable risk. This Core Concept course gives executives a disciplined approach to framing problems, allocating decision rights, weighing options under uncertainty and testing judgement before commitment. Participants work through case material from several sectors and leave with an Executive Decision Brief for a pending strategic decision in their own organisation, including a decision rights map and a risk-adjusted options analysis.

Course Objectives

- Classify strategic problems by complexity using the Cynefin Framework and choose a decision approach that fits the context
- Frame and structure ill-defined problems using issue trees and the Minto Pyramid Principle before resources are committed
- Allocate decision rights and involvement levels using Bain RAPID and the Vroom-Yetton-Jago Model
- Evaluate strategic options under uncertainty using decision trees, multi-criteria analysis and ISO 31000 risk criteria
- Challenge executive judgement for bias and noise using pre-mortems, red teams and decision hygiene practices
- Present an Executive Decision Brief that a board or leadership team can approve, reject or return with conditions

Target Audience

- Executives accountable for enterprise strategy, investment and portfolio decisions
- Heads of divisions and business units whose decisions carry cross-functional consequences
- Chief officers of functions such as finance, operations, risk and technology who advise the board
- Directors of strategy and transformation offices who prepare options for leadership teams
- Senior leaders of public bodies and non-profit organisations who answer to governing boards

Course Outline

Day 1: Decision Context and Executive Judgement

- Decision Typology: Strategic, Tactical and Operational Decisions
- Cynefin Framework: Clear, Complicated, Complex and Chaotic Domains
- One-Way and Two-Way Door Decisions: Reversibility and Speed
- ISO 37000 Governance Principles for Accountable Decision-Making
- Decision Quality Audit of Recent Leadership Decisions

Day 2: Structured Problem-Solving and Decision Models

- Kepner-Tregoe Situation Appraisal and Problem Analysis
- Issue Trees and MECE Problem Decomposition
- Minto Pyramid Principle for Framing the Governing Question
- Bain RAPID Decision Rights Allocation
- Vroom-Yetton-Jago Model for Choosing Participation Levels

Day 3: Evaluating Options Under Uncertainty

- Decision Tree and Expected Value Analysis
- Analytic Hierarchy Process for Multi-Criteria Choices
- Scenario Planning with Critical Uncertainty Axes
- ISO 31000 Risk Criteria and Risk Appetite in Option Selection
- IEC 31010 Techniques for Assessing Decision Risk

Day 4: Bias, Noise and Decisions Under Pressure

- Heuristics and Biases: Anchoring, Confirmation and Sunk Cost
- Noise Audits and Decision Hygiene Practices
- Pre-Mortem Analysis and Red Team Challenge
- Groupthink Safeguards: Devil's Advocacy and Dialectical Inquiry
- OODA Loop for Crisis and Time-Critical Decisions

Day 5: Case Work and the Executive Decision Brief

- Capital Investment Case Study: Build, Buy or Partner
- Market Exit Case Study: Reversing a Strategic Commitment
- Decision Rights Map for an Own Strategic Decision
- Executive Decision Brief Drafting
- Board-Style Challenge Panel and Brief Defence

Skills You Will Gain

- Strategic Problem Framing
- Decision Rights Design
- Options Appraisal
- Risk-Informed Judgement
- Cognitive Bias Mitigation
- Scenario Thinking
- Executive Briefing
- Decision Governance

Why Attend This Course

- Return to work with an Executive Decision Brief for a live decision, already tested against board-style challenge
- Shorten the path from problem to decision by agreeing in advance who recommends, who decides and who is consulted
- Recognise when a proposal rests on bias or untested assumptions and ask the questions that expose it
- Compare how executives from other sectors and countries govern high-stakes decisions

Conclusion

Executive decisions rarely fail for lack of information; they fail through poor framing, unclear ownership and judgement that nobody tests. This course moves from classifying the decision context, through structured problem-solving and decision rights models, to option appraisal under uncertainty and the biases that distort it. The final day applies these methods to cross-sector cases and to an Executive Decision Brief that participants take back to their leadership team, giving them a repeatable discipline for the consequential choices ahead.