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# Clear Decision Builder

Every business runs on decisions. Which supplier to use, whether to hire, what price to set, which problem to fix first, whether to say yes to a tempting opportunity or no to a loyal but costly habit. Yet many important decisions are made in the worst possible conditions: quickly, verbally, with half the facts in the room and the other half in someone's memory, driven by whoever spoke loudest or most recently. Weeks later, nobody can reconstruct why the choice was made, the same argument repeats, and the business pays twice — once for the decision, and once for the confusion around it. The Clear Decision Builder is a practical system for making decisions in a way that is clear before, during, and after the choice: the question stated plainly, the options listed honestly, the facts separated from opinions, the costs and risks compared on the same terms, a decision made by a named person by a named date, and the reasoning written down where it can be checked later.

The Builder is not a machine that makes decisions for you, and it does not promise that clear decisions will always turn out well. No system can promise that, and any system that does should not be trusted. What clarity does promise is different and very valuable: you will make fewer decisions by accident, you will spot missing facts before they become expensive surprises, you will stop re-deciding settled questions every month, and when a decision turns out badly you will be able to learn the exact lesson — was the fact wrong, the risk misjudged, or the follow-through missing — instead of just feeling that "it went wrong." Clear decisions compound. A business that decides clearly gets faster and calmer over time, because each decision leaves behind a record the next decision can build on.

This system helps owners, managers, team leads, and anyone whose choices affect other people's work or money. It helps most on decisions that are repeated, expensive, hard to reverse, or argued about — hiring, pricing, suppliers, equipment, offers, partnerships, and priorities. It also scales down gracefully: the full Builder suits a major choice, while a five-minute short form suits a small one, and this set teaches you to tell the difference. You do not need special software. You need a page, a pen or a simple document, and the honesty to write down what you do not know alongside what you do.

It matters because unclear decisions are quietly among the most expensive things in a small business. They consume meetings, reverse themselves, demoralise the people asked to carry them out, and hide their costs in rework and delay. A clear decision, by contrast, can be explained in one minute, carried out without returning for clarification, and reviewed without blame. By the end of this set you will know how to frame a decision question, gather and separate facts from opinions, build and compare real options, weigh cost, risk, and reversibility honestly, and record and review decisions so your business learns from every one it makes.

## What You Will Learn

- How to tell which decisions deserve the full Builder, which deserve the short form, and which need no builder at all.

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• How to write a decision question in one sentence, with the deadline, the decision-maker, and what a good outcome must protect.

• How to gather facts and label opinions, guesses, and unknowns honestly, so a decision rests on what is actually known.

• How to build real options — including doing nothing and the smaller test option — described in the same terms.

• How to compare options fairly using cost, benefit, risk, effort, and reversibility, without letting one loud factor decide everything.

• How to make the decision: who decides, by when, what would change the decision, and how it will be announced and carried out.

• How to write a short decision record that stops re-deciding and makes future review possible.

• How to review a past decision fairly — judging the reasoning by what was known then — and extract the lesson.

## Lesson 1 — Frame the Decision: The Question, the Decider, and the Deadline

Most muddled decisions start muddled. The room argues about solutions before agreeing on the question. One person is deciding whether to hire, another is deciding how to cope without hiring, and a third is really arguing that the workload itself should shrink. Lesson 1 prevents that tangle by framing the decision before any option is debated. Framing means writing four things at the top of the page. First, the decision question in one sentence, phrased so it can be answered by choosing between options: "Which supplier will provide our packaging for the next twelve months?" is a decision question. "Packaging is a problem" is a complaint, and no choice can answer it. Second, the decision-maker: one named person who will make the final call after hearing input. Input can come from many; the decision must come from one, or it will come from drift. Third, the deadline: the date by which the decision must be made, and what happens if it is not — because "no decision" is itself a decision with consequences that deserve naming. Fourth, the must-protects: the things a good outcome cannot sacrifice, such as cash safety, legal obligations, quality promises to customers, or staff capacity. Must-protects act as guardrails when an attractive option quietly violates one.

Size the effort to the decision. Three factors set the size: cost if wrong, reversibility, and how many people the decision binds. A cheap, reversible choice affecting only you — which of two similar notebooks to order — needs no builder; just decide. A moderate choice — a new rota system for a small team — deserves the short form: question, two or three options, main cost and risk of each, decision and one-line reason, on half a page. An expensive, hard-to-reverse choice that binds others — a lease, a hire, a major supplier contract, a price change for all customers — earns the full Builder across all five lessons. Spending full effort on small decisions creates bureaucracy and teaches people to dodge the system; spending small effort on large decisions creates the disasters the system exists to prevent. When in doubt, ask: "If this goes

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wrong, what does it cost, and how hard is it to undo?" Let the honest answer set the form.

Also name the decision type, because different types fail differently. A choice between options (which supplier) fails by comparing unfairly. A yes-or-no decision (whether to launch) fails by never seriously building the "no" case. A priority decision (which project first) fails by pretending everything can be first. A timing decision (now or later) fails by ignoring the cost of waiting. Writing the type beside the question quietly tells you which trap to watch for in the later lessons.

## The Steps

1. Write the decision question in one sentence that options could answer. If you cannot, spend ten minutes clarifying the problem until you can.
2. Name the single decision-maker in writing. List separately who will be consulted and who will merely be informed afterwards.
3. Set the decision deadline and write what happens if the deadline passes with no decision. Treat that outcome as one of the options to beat.
4. Write two to four must-protects: the limits no acceptable option may break, such as cash floor, quality promise, legal duty, or team capacity.
5. Score the decision's size: cost if wrong, difficulty of reversing, and number of people bound. Choose the full Builder, the short form, or no builder, and note why.
6. Name the decision type — choice between options, yes-or-no, priority, or timing — and note the typical trap for that type from this lesson.
7. Read the frame aloud to one person involved. If they thought the question was something else, fix the frame now, before options are built.

## A Worked Example

Hassan owns a small printing business. For weeks, talk in the workshop has circled around "the paper problem": costs rising, one supplier unreliable, staff frustrated. Two meetings ended without conclusion because, Hassan realises, three different decisions were being argued as one. He frames them separately. Decision one, a choice between options: "Which paper supplier will be our main supplier for the next six months?" Decision-maker: Hassan. Deadline: the end of the month, because the current arrangement expires; if undecided, ordering continues week to week at the highest price — named plainly as the cost of drift. Must-protects: print quality for existing customer work, and never holding so much stock that cash for wages is squeezed. Decision two, a yes-or-no for later: whether to buy a paper-cutting machine, which had been contaminating the supplier debate with unrelated excitement. Decision three, a timing decision: when to raise prices, parked with its own date after the supplier choice, since the supplier's price affects the answer. The next meeting, with only decision one on the page, finishes in forty minutes. The framing did not supply the answer. It supplied the question — and half of clear deciding is refusing to answer three questions while pretending they are one.

## Common Mistakes

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- **Debating solutions before agreeing the question.** If people are solving different problems, energy rises and clarity falls. Frame first, always.
- **No named decision-maker.** "The team will decide" often means nobody decides, or the decision is re-litigated by whoever dislikes it. Consult widely; decide singly.
- **No deadline, or a deadline with no named consequence.** Decisions without deadlines drift until circumstances decide for you, usually badly and at full price.
- **Full process for tiny decisions.** Applying the heavy form to trivial choices teaches people to avoid the system. Match the effort to cost and reversibility.

## Lesson 2 — Facts, Opinions, and Unknowns: Know What You Actually Know

A decision is only as good as the information under it, and most decision trouble is information trouble in disguise. Lesson 2 sorts everything the room "knows" into three honest piles. Facts are things that can be checked: figures from records, dates, prices in writing, measurements, direct observations with a when and a who. Opinions are judgements: what experienced people believe will happen, prefer, or expect. Opinions from experienced people are valuable — but they are not facts, and they must travel under their own label so the decider can weigh them properly. Unknowns are the things nobody in the room actually knows yet: the supplier's real delivery reliability, whether customers will accept a price rise, how long the new hire will take to train. Unknowns are not embarrassments. Written down, they become the most useful pile of all, because each unknown gets one of three treatments before the decision: find out (if it is checkable in time), test (if a small experiment can reveal it), or carry it as a named risk in Lesson 4, with eyes open.

Gather facts from records before gathering them from memories. The pattern from the other Fortress systems holds here too: the invoice file beats recollection on price; the booking book beats impressions on demand; the complaint notes beat the feeling that "customers are happy." Where a number matters, ask for its source and date, and write both beside it. A figure without a source is an opinion wearing a fact's coat. Watch especially for the confident, precise, unsourced number — it steers decisions more than any other kind of statement, and it is wrong more often than anyone expects.

Handle opinions with respect and structure. Ask each contributor for their opinion plus the experience under it: "I believe this supplier will let us down, because in my last job they missed three of five deadlines" is an opinion with evidence you can weigh. "They seem flaky" is an opinion with nothing under it, and should be recorded as exactly that — not mocked, not obeyed. Disagreement between experienced people is information too: it usually marks a genuine unknown, and the Builder sends it to the unknowns pile rather than settling it by seniority or volume.

Set a fact-gathering limit before you start, or research becomes a way to postpone deciding. For most small-business decisions, name the three to five facts that would most change the choice, set a date to have them, and stop there. If a fact cannot be obtained by the deadline, it moves to

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unknowns and the decision proceeds honestly without it. Perfection is not available; clarity about imperfection is, and it is enough.

## The Steps

1. Open three sections on your page: Facts, Opinions, Unknowns. Everything offered in discussion goes into one of the three, visibly.

2. For each fact, write its source and date beside it — record, document, measurement, or named direct observation. Demote anything unsourced to Opinions.

3. For each opinion, add the experience or evidence under it in one line. If there is none, write "no evidence offered yet" without embarrassment or mockery.

4. List the unknowns explicitly. For each, choose: find out by a set date, test with a small trial, or carry as a named risk into the comparison lesson.

5. Before gathering, name the three to five facts that would most change this decision. Gather those first and set a stop date for research.

6. Where two experienced people disagree, do not settle it by rank. Move the point to Unknowns and treat it there.

7. Close the lesson by reading the three piles aloud. The decider confirms: this is what we know, what we judge, and what we do not know. Only then build options.

## A Worked Example

Aisha manages a café and must decide whether to open on Sundays. The first discussion is a swirl: "Sunday will definitely be busy," "staff will hate it," "the bakery across town does well on Sundays." Aisha rebuilds the discussion in three piles. Facts: the café's Saturday figures from the till for the last three months; the wage cost of a Sunday shift, calculated from actual rotas; the lease permits Sunday trading; two staff have written availability for Sundays, five have not answered, one has said no. Opinions: Aisha's belief, from six years in cafés, that Sunday trade builds slowly over months rather than starting strong — recorded with its evidence; the head barista's opinion that Sunday customers linger and buy more per visit, based on her previous café, also recorded. Unknowns: real Sunday footfall on their street (treatment: test — a four-Sunday trial with a set review date), whether the five silent staff are willing (treatment: find out — ask directly this week, before deciding), and the effect on Monday performance if the same staff work Sundays (treatment: carry as a risk, monitored during the trial). The decision that follows is not magically correct, but it is honest: a trial, with the unknowns named, instead of a permanent commitment argued from a swirl. Two months later the trial figures, not anyone's debating skill, settle the question.

## Common Mistakes

- **Letting opinions wear fact costumes.** An unsourced number or a confident "everyone knows" steers the room while escaping checking. Label everything; demote without drama.

- **Hiding unknowns to look prepared.** A decision page with no unknowns is not thorough; it is dishonest. The unknowns pile is where the risks and the tests come from.

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- **Researching forever.** Endless fact-gathering is often fear of deciding in disguise. Name the decisive facts, set a stop date, and let the rest be unknowns.
- **Settling disagreements by seniority.** When experienced people disagree, you have found an unknown, not a winner. Record it and treat it properly.

## Lesson 3 — Build Real Options and Compare Them Fairly

Decisions feel hard when the options are bad — not bad choices, but badly built ones: one real option argued in detail against a straw alternative nobody would pick, or a single proposal with nothing to compare it against, so the meeting can only say yes or stall. Lesson 3 builds options properly. Every full decision gets at least three. Option one is usually the proposal that started the discussion. Option two is a genuine alternative that a reasonable person could choose — different supplier, different scale, different timing, different method. Option three is the honest baseline: do nothing, or keep the current arrangement, described with the same respect and detail as the others, because doing nothing has real costs and real benefits that deserve daylight. For many decisions a fourth option earns its place: the small test — pilot, trial period, single-location run, probationary arrangement — which buys information before commitment and often dissolves the argument between the bold option and the cautious one.

Describe every option in the same terms, on the same page, or comparison is rigged from the start. Use the same five headings for each: what it involves in two or three sentences; its full cost over the same period, including staff time and not just purchase price; its main expected benefit, tied to the decision question; its main risks, drawn from your unknowns pile; and its reversibility — how hard and costly it is to undo if wrong. Same headings, same period, same cost rules. When one option's costs are counted lovingly and another's are waved at, the comparison is theatre. Insist on symmetry, and be suspicious of any option whose risks section is empty: that option has not been thought about yet, however attractive its benefits look.

Score lightly, if at all. Some teams like rating each option against the must-protects and the main criteria with simple marks. That can help discussion, but treat scores as a conversation aid, never as an oracle — adding up marks can hide the fact that one option breaks a must-protect, which no total score should be allowed to outweigh. Check must-protects first, as a gate: any option that violates one is out or must be redesigned, whatever its other virtues. Then compare the survivors on cost, benefit, risk, and reversibility together, and let the decider weigh them with judgement, informed by the page rather than replaced by it.

Finally, watch for the two classic rigged comparisons. The first is the extreme alternative: the proposal compared only with an absurd option, making it look inevitable. The second is the moving proposal: the favoured option quietly changes shape whenever a flaw is found, so it is never actually examined. Pin each option's description in writing at the start of the comparison, and let changes be made openly, as new versions, for every option equally.

### The Steps

1. Write at least three options: the original proposal, one genuine alternative, and the honest do-nothing or keep-current baseline.

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2. Consider a fourth option: the small test — trial, pilot, or phased start — that buys real information before full commitment.

3. Describe every option under the same five headings: what it involves, full cost over the same period, main benefit, main risks, and reversibility.

4. Apply the must-protects from Lesson 1 as a gate. Remove or redesign any option that breaks one, regardless of its other attractions.

5. Check symmetry: same time period, same cost rules including staff time, risks honestly filled for every option. An empty risks section means more thinking is owed.

6. If you score options, score them against the same criteria and treat totals as discussion aids only — never as a substitute for the decider's judgement.

7. Pin the option descriptions in writing for the decision meeting. Any change to an option is written as an open revision, applied fairly across options.

## A Worked Example

Daniel runs a small gym deciding how to handle overcrowded evening classes. The proposal on the table is to rent the hall next door — costed by its supporter as "just the rent." Daniel rebuilds the comparison properly. Option A, rent the hall: full cost includes rent, insurance change, extra cleaning, heating, and a second instructor for split sessions — nearly double the figure first quoted — with the benefit of twelve extra places per class and the risk of a twelve-month lease against uncertain demand; reversibility poor inside the lease term. Option B, cap classes and add a booking waitlist plus one weekend class: cost is mainly instructor hours for the added class; benefit is relief within a fortnight; risk is member frustration at caps; reversibility excellent. Option C, do nothing: cost is zero in money but real in kind — continued overcrowding, instructor strain, and the two complaints a month the records show, with likely member losses Daniel estimates honestly as an opinion. Option D, the small test: rent the hall for one month on a short arrangement the hall offers, if available, and measure actual extra attendance. Against the must-protect — never commit to costs that would force cutting existing classes — Option A in its twelve-month form fails the gate today. The decision becomes Option B now, with Option D's test in the peak month to inform a later, fuller decision on the hall. Nothing about the gym's problem changed. The comparison changed — from one under-costed proposal versus grumbling, to four options on equal terms with a gate applied.

## Common Mistakes

- **One real option and a straw alternative.** If nobody could honestly choose the alternative, you do not have options; you have a sales pitch.
- **Omitting the do-nothing baseline.** Keeping the current arrangement always has costs and benefits. Hidden, it cannot be beaten fairly or chosen wisely.
- **Counting costs unevenly.** Purchase price for one option, full cost including time for another. Same period, same rules, every option.
- **Letting scores overrule a broken must-protect.** A high total cannot repair a violated guardrail. The gate comes first; scoring, if used, comes second.

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# Lesson 4 — Decide, Record, and Announce: Ending the Argument Well

After framing, facts, and fair comparison, someone must decide — and the quality of everything before this lesson depends on this one being done cleanly. Lesson 4 has four movements: the decision itself, the change-conditions, the record, and the announcement. The decision is made by the named decision-maker from Lesson 1, by the deadline, choosing among the options as compared. The decider may consult until the deadline; after deciding, consultation ends and execution begins. A decider who keeps informally re-opening the question after announcing it teaches the whole business that decisions are drafts, and every future decision gets slower. If genuinely new facts emerge — not new opinions about old facts — Lesson 5's review path exists for exactly that. Preference, discomfort, and lobbying are not new facts.

At the moment of deciding, write the change-conditions: the two or three observable things that, if they happen, would justify revisiting this decision early. For example: "We revisit if delivery failures exceed two in any month, or if costs rise more than ten percent." Change-conditions do two jobs. They give doubters a fair, agreed path — the decision is not a prison; it has stated doors. And they protect the decision from casual erosion, because revisiting now requires pointing at a condition, not just at a feeling. Pair them with a review date for any significant decision: a set day, months ahead, when Lesson 5 will examine how the choice is performing.

The record is short and non-negotiable for full-Builder decisions: the question, the decider, the date, the option chosen, the options rejected in a line each, the three main reasons grounded in your facts and comparison, the change-conditions, and the review date. Half a page is enough. File records in one known place, numbered or dated, where anyone affected can find them. The record is what stops the most corrosive sentence in business life — "why did we ever decide this?" — from being unanswerable. It also protects the decider: a decision that later turns out badly but was reasoned well, on the facts then available, reads in its record as good work in an uncertain world, which is the truth of most business decisions.

Announce the decision properly. Everyone affected hears the same message at roughly the same time: what was decided, when it starts, what it means for them specifically, the reasons in brief, and what happens if they hit problems. Decisions leak and distort when announced by rumour. The announcement also names the first execution steps and their owners, bridging straight from deciding into doing — because a decision without a first step and an owner is a wish that has been minuted.

## The Steps

1. The named decision-maker decides by the deadline, choosing from the compared options. Record the choice and the date immediately.
2. Write two or three change-conditions: observable events that would justify revisiting this decision before its review date.
3. Set a review date proportionate to the decision's size — weeks for small, a quarter or more for large — and put it in the calendar now.

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4. Write the decision record on half a page: question, decider, date, chosen option, rejected options in one line each, three main reasons, change-conditions, review date.

5. File the record in the one known place for decision records. Tell affected people where it lives.

6. Announce once, to everyone affected, in the same terms: the decision, start date, what it means for them, brief reasons, and who to go to with problems.

7. Name the first execution steps with owners and dates before the meeting ends, so the decision lands in work, not just in words.

### A Worked Example

Farah manages a small care-services office and has used the Builder to decide on a new scheduling system. The options were the current paper rota, a simple shared-calendar system, and a full specialist software package. Her record reads, in part: "Question: which scheduling system will the office use from next quarter? Decider: Farah. Date: 14 March. Chosen: the shared-calendar system. Rejected: paper rota — errors now cost roughly six staff hours weekly in corrections (fact, from February log); specialist package — full cost including training exceeds this year's systems budget and breaks the cash must-protect. Reasons: calendar system removes most correction hours at low cost; reversible within a month; two staff already fluent. Change-conditions: revisit if correction hours do not fall by half within two months, or if the calendar provider announces closure. Review date: 14 June." The announcement goes to all staff the same afternoon, with the start date, two named helpers for anyone struggling, and the first steps: accounts created this week by one named owner, paper rota runs in parallel for exactly two weeks, then stops. In June, nobody needs to reconstruct anything. The record is there, the review date arrives, and the correction-hours figure settles the review in minutes. The decision's real legacy is not the software. It is that Farah's team now believes decisions in this office stay decided — and argues hard before the deadline instead of forever after it.

### Common Mistakes

- **Re-opening decisions informally.** A decider who relitigates over coffee destroys the system's authority. New facts go through change-conditions and review; preferences do not.
- **No written record.** Memory rewrites reasons within months, usually in favour of whoever is speaking. Half a page, filed in one place, prevents it.
- **Announcing by leak.** If affected people hear different versions from different people, you will spend the execution phase correcting rumours instead of working.
- **Decision with no first step.** "We will switch suppliers" with no named first action, owner, or date quietly becomes "we meant to switch suppliers." Bridge into execution in the same meeting.

## Lesson 5 — Review the Decision: Learning Without Blame

A decision system that never looks back produces confidence without improvement. Lesson 5 closes the loop: on the review date set in Lesson 4, or when a change-condition fires, the

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decision is examined against its own record. The review asks four questions, in order, from documents rather than memories. One: what did we decide and why — read from the record, not reconstructed. Two: what actually happened — measured against the expectations and figures the decision used. Three: where did reality differ from our facts, opinions, and unknowns — which pile served us, which misled us, and was the misleading knowable at the time? Four: what do we do now — continue, adjust, or reverse — and what general lesson goes into our future decisions?

The fairness rule governs everything in this lesson: judge the decision by what was known and knowable at the time it was made, never by what is obvious now. Hindsight makes every wrong outcome look like a stupid choice, and reviewers who use it teach deciders to hide, delay, and choose only the safest options. A decision can be well made and turn out badly — the risk you named and accepted simply happened. A decision can be badly made and turn out well — luck, not skill, and the review should say so kindly and clearly, because luck praised as skill gets repeated until it fails. Separating the quality of the deciding from the quality of the outcome is the single most mature habit the Builder teaches, and the one that makes people willing to decide at all.

Extract lessons at the level of the system, not just the case. "The supplier failed" is a case note. "Our decisions keep underestimating training time by half" is a system lesson, and it belongs in a short running list — call it the Lessons List — that future decision-makers read during Lesson 2's fact-gathering. Over a year, this list becomes the business's real education: its own patterns, in its own words, bought at its own prices and now working for free. Keep the list short and honest; five true patterns are worth more than fifty vague resolutions.

Reviews also decide the fate of the decision itself, cleanly. Continue: the decision stands, perhaps with a new review date. Adjust: the direction stands but a term changes — volume, timing, supplier tier — recorded as a short amendment to the original record, not a fresh fog. Reverse: the decision is ended, with the reason tied to evidence or a fired change-condition, and the reversal announced with the same care as the original decision, so nobody keeps executing a dead choice from an old message. Every outcome is a success of the system. The only failure the Builder recognises is the unexamined decision, repeated.

## The Steps

1. Hold the review on the date set in the decision record, or when a change-condition fires — whichever comes first. Bring the record itself.

2. Read the original question, options, reasons, and expectations aloud from the record before discussing outcomes.

3. Present what actually happened in the same measures the decision used: costs, figures, dates, incidents. Fill gaps from records, not impressions.

4. Sort the differences: which facts held, which opinions proved right or wrong, which unknowns resolved and how. For each miss, ask whether it was knowable at the time.

5. Judge deciding quality and outcome quality separately, and say both judgements plainly in the review note.

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6. Decide the decision's fate — continue, adjust by written amendment, or reverse with announcement — and record it on or beside the original record.

7. Add any system-level lesson, in one sentence, to the Lessons List that future Lesson 2 sessions will read. Keep the list short by merging duplicates.

### A Worked Example

George owns a bakery and reviews, in October, his April decision to stop Sunday opening for the summer season — a decision his record shows was based on last summer's till facts showing Sunday barely covering its wage costs, with a change-condition: revisit early if the new housing estate nearby opened and footfall visibly changed. The estate did open, in August, and George — to his credit — fired the condition and ran a four-Sunday test rather than either ignoring the change or reversing permanently on a hunch. The review now reads the test figures: Sunday takings up substantially, wage cover comfortable, but Monday morning preparation strain visible in staff notes — an effect nobody had listed even as an unknown in April. Outcome judgement: the April decision was right for the facts of April; the August test was the system working; the new decision — open Sundays with a Monday preparation adjustment — is recorded as an amendment with its own review date in January. Deciding-quality judgement: good, with one system lesson added to the Lessons List in George's own words: "When we decide about a day, list effects on the days either side of it." That single sentence, earned cheaply, will improve every scheduling decision George's bakery makes for years. The review took fifty minutes and produced no blame, one amendment, and one permanent lesson — a fair picture of what Lesson 5 is for.

### Common Mistakes

- **Judging by hindsight.** Condemning a reasonable decision because the named risk happened teaches people never to decide. Judge by what was known and knowable then.
- **Praising lucky bad decisions.** A careless choice that luck rescued will be repeated until luck runs out. Name the luck kindly and clearly.
- **Reviewing from memory instead of the record.** Without the record, the review argues about what was decided instead of learning from it. Bring the page.
- **Lessons that stay case-sized.** "That supplier was bad" helps once. "We underestimate training time" helps forever. Lift every lesson to the pattern level and write it on the Lessons List.

## Try It

Take one real decision currently circling your business — the one that has been discussed twice without settling — and run it through the full Builder this week. Day one: frame it. One-sentence question, named decider, deadline with its no-decision consequence, must-protects, size, and type, all on one page top. Day two: sort the piles. Facts with sources and dates, opinions with the experience under them, unknowns with a treatment for each — find out, test, or carry as risk — and stop gathering on the stop date you set. Day three: build at least three options including the honest baseline and, if one exists, the small test; describe each under the same five

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headings, apply the must-protect gate, and check the costing symmetry twice. Day four: decide. The decider chooses by the deadline, writes the change-conditions and review date, completes the half-page record, files it in the one place you have chosen for all decision records, and announces it once to everyone affected with the first execution steps named and owned. Then calendar the review date before you do anything else.

Keep every decision record in that single place from now on, and start your Lessons List with the first review you hold. Within a few months you will own something most businesses never build: a shelf of clear questions, honest piles, fair comparisons, and dated lessons — proof that your business does not just make decisions, it learns how it makes them. That is the Clear Decision Builder working exactly as designed.

Fortress shares what I learned, not professional advice. General info only, not legal / HR / financial advice.

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