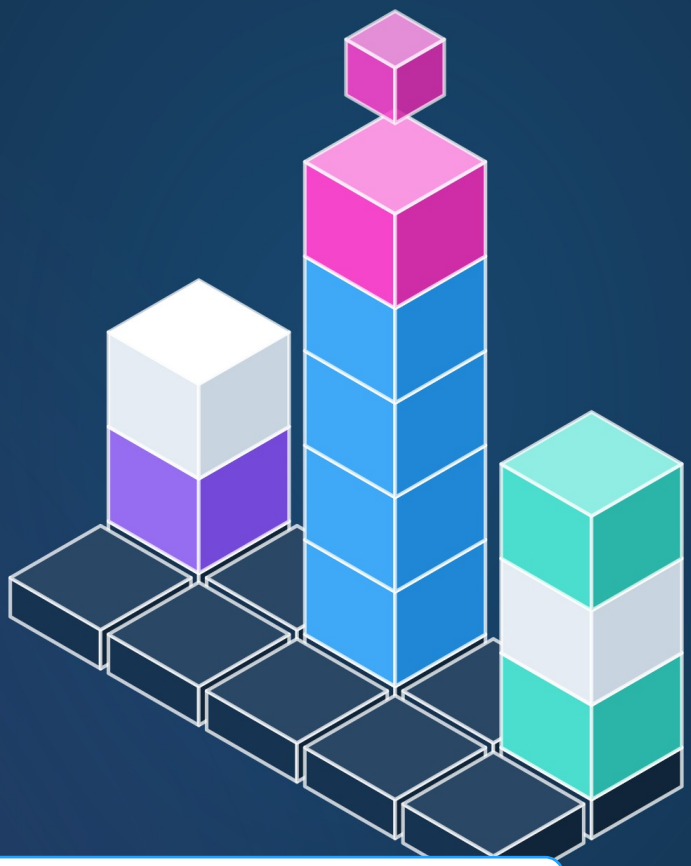
OPERATIONS INSIDER

LEAN · OPERATIONS · LEADERSHIP

STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING QUICK START CHECKLIST

Score how your decisions are made in one hour, with records you can point at.



FRAME. COMPARE. DECIDE. REVIEW.

START HERE

How to Use This Check

One area or one management team, one hour, twenty-five statements, one number. Score how decisions are actually made, not how the organization chart says they are.

01 LOOK	02 SCORE	03 ACT
Take the last five decisions of real weight. Open what exists: the request, the records, the figures behind them and the reviews.	Score each statement from 0 to 4. Without a record, a sheet or a register you can point at, the score is 2 or lower.	Pick the weakest block and agree one action with an owner and a date before you leave the room.

The Scoring Scale

POINTS	MEANING
0	Not in place.
1	Happens occasionally, depends on individuals.
2	Partly in place, not consistent across areas or decision types.
3	Mostly in place and visible in the records.
4	Consistently in place, visible, reviewed and improved.

> **WHY STRUCTURE A DECISION**
>
> **A decision that is never framed is decided anyway: by the first number in the room, by the person who speaks longest, or by the date on which it can no longer be avoided. Structure does not make the choice. It makes the choice visible, comparable and open to review.**

Before You Start

- **Scope:** one plant, one department or one management team, and the decisions it takes itself.
- **Evidence:** the last five decisions above your own threshold, with whatever paper exists for each.
- **Tone:** you check the method, not the choices. Ask how the number was found, not whether the result was right.

THE CHECK

01 Frame and Decision Rights

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
01	Every decision above an agreed threshold is written as one question with one choice to be made, not as a topic.	
02	The trigger, the date by which the decision is needed and the cost of deciding late are written down.	
03	Each decision is classified as reversible or hard to reverse, and the effort spent on it follows from that class.	
04	For every decision it is written who decides, who must be heard, who supplies facts and who is informed afterward.	
05	A decision that nobody owns is escalated by a written rule, not by chance or by the loudest voice.	

02 Goals and Criteria

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
06	Goals and criteria are written before alternatives are discussed, not after a favorite has appeared.	
07	Criteria are split into must criteria, which exclude an alternative, and want criteria, which are weighted.	
08	Every must criterion is written so that it can be answered yes or no with evidence anyone can check.	
09	Want criteria are weighted by a repeatable method, and the weights are agreed before any alternative is scored.	
10	Each want criterion has a measurable definition of what a high score and a low score mean.	

THE CHECK

03 Alternatives

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
11	At least three alternatives are described for every decision of weight, including the option of doing nothing.	
12	The option of doing nothing is costed and compared, not dismissed, so that every other option has a baseline.	
13	Alternatives are described to the same level of detail, with the same data and the same period for each.	
14	Generating alternatives is a separate step with its own time, before any of them is evaluated.	
15	An alternative that fails a must criterion is recorded with the reason, not deleted without trace.	

04 Evaluation and Uncertainty

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
16	Scores are given against the written criteria with evidence, and the source and date of every number are named.	
17	Costs and benefits are compared over the same period for all alternatives, with the same rates and the same volumes.	
18	Participants score silently and in writing before the discussion, and only the differences are discussed.	
19	At least two cases beside the expected one are calculated, and the ranking is checked in each of them.	
20	A sensitivity check shows which assumption or which weight would change the ranking of the top two options.	

THE CHECK

05 Decide, Record and Review

NO.	CHECK	SCORE 0 TO 4
21	Every decision of weight has a record with the question, the options, the reason, the assumptions and the owner.	
22	The assumptions behind the decision are written as numbers with a range, not as adjectives.	
23	Each decision has a review date, and the review compares the numbers that happened with the assumptions.	
24	Decisions, their records and their reviews are kept in one register that everyone involved can read.	
25	What the review found changes the next decision sheet, the criteria or the threshold, and that change is visible.	

Your Result

BLOCK	POINTS	OUT OF
01 Frame and Decision Rights		20
02 Goals and Criteria		20
03 Alternatives		20
04 Evaluation and Uncertainty		20
05 Decide, Record and Review		20
TOTAL		100

YOUR RESULT

Read the Number

The total tells you how much of your decision making is method and how much is habit. The weakest block tells you where to start.

TOTAL	WHAT IT MEANS	WHAT TO DO FIRST
0 to 39	Unframed. Decisions appear in meetings and are remembered differently afterward.	Write one question, one decider and one date for the next decision of weight.
40 to 59	Discussed. Options are talked through, but criteria arrive after the favorite.	Agree must and want criteria with weights before the options are compared.
60 to 79	Compared. Criteria and alternatives exist, uncertainty is not tested.	Add two cases beside the expected one and a sensitivity check of the top two.
80 to 100	Reviewed. Decisions are recorded, reviewed and the method improves.	Hold the level. Lower the threshold so that more decisions get the method.

Your Three Priorities

NO.	WHAT TO IMPROVE	FIRST ACTION	OWNER	DUE

THE RULE FOR EVERY ACTION

Owner and date, or it did not happen. Repeat the check after three months on the five newest decisions and compare the blocks, not the feeling.

What to Do Next

NEXT STEP	WHAT YOU GET
STARTER KIT	The guide for your next real decision, plus the decision sheet in Excel with criteria, weights, a must check and a weighted comparison of your options.
EXCELLENCE BUNDLE	The full playbook, a two-day workshop pack, six templates, the Excel system with scenarios, sensitivity, bias check, decision note and register, and a workshop deck.

Both are available at operationsinsider.com.