VERSION 3.0

A PROFESSIONAL THINKING SYSTEM

Framework Thinking

NAME THE PROBLEM · GENERATE OPTIONS
DECIDE · ACT · COMMUNICATE · SUSTAIN

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FRAMEWORK THINKING
The Professional's Thinking Partner

FRONT MATTER

Start Here

How to Read This Book

This book is organised around how problems unfold, not around framework categories

THE STRUCTURE

This book is organised by the stage of thinking you are in when a problem hits. Each stage contains frameworks suited to that phase. Open it at the stage where you are stuck, not at the topic you think applies.

THE SEVEN STAGES AT A GLANCE

1. **Name the Problem: what kind of problem is this?**
   Identify what you are actually dealing with before reaching for any tool.
2. **Understand It Deeply: what is really going on here?**
   Diagnose before you prescribe. A wrong diagnosis costs far more than the time to get it right.
3. **Generate Options: what could you do?**
   Most professionals generate two options and call it a choice. These frameworks force your thinking wider first.
4. **Decide: which path?**
   Frameworks surface the trade-offs. The decision is always yours.
5. **Act: how do you make it happen?**
   A decision without execution is just an opinion.
6. **Communicate: how do you bring others along?**
   Give them the answer in the first sentence.
7. **Sustain: how do you make it stick?**
   Most initiatives fail not at launch but three months later.

HOW TO READ A FRAMEWORK CARD

Every card follows the same structure: Concept, The Framework, What Good Looks Like (weak vs strong), Anti-pattern, Works Well With, and a footer with Output and Avoid When.

READING BY ROLE

Individual Contributor
Start with Stage 7 (Sustain), Stage 6 (Communicate), Stage 4 (Decide). Master Eisenhower, GTD, and Pyramid Principle first.

Manager
Start with Stage 2 (Understand) and Stage 5 (Act). Master SCARF, CLEAR, GROW, and Radical Candor first.

Senior Leader
Start with Stage 1 (Name) and Stage 5 (Act). Master Cynefin, OKRs, Kotter, and McKinsey 7S first.

Anyone in a Crisis
Open the Common Journeys table. Find the closest situation. Follow the stage sequence listed.

THE CARDINAL RULE

Define the problem in one sentence before you open this book. If you cannot write it, no framework can solve it.

THE CARDINAL ERROR

Picking a framework before understanding the problem. If you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

FRONT MATTER

The 3 Rules

Read First

How to use frameworks without being used by them

WHY RULES MATTER

Frameworks are mental lenses, not rigid laws. Used well, they sharpen your thinking and surface options you would not have seen. Used badly, they become bureaucratic theatre: boxes filled, forms completed, decisions delayed. These three rules exist to prevent the second outcome.

RULE 1

Define the problem before you open this book.

Write the problem in one sentence before selecting any tool. If you cannot write it clearly, the framework cannot help you. Analytical structure cannot compensate for a poorly defined question.

RULE 2

The goal is a decision, not a filled-out form.

The moment you have a clear insight, stop analysing and start acting. Ask yourself after every exercise: what will I do differently because of this? If the answer is nothing, you spent too long in the framework.

RULE 3

You make the call. The framework organises your thinking.

A framework organises data. You make the hard call. If the score says Go but your instinct screams Stop, pause. The framework might be missing a variable only you can see. Neither tool nor instinct is infallible. The best decisions use both.

AND ONE STANDING PRINCIPLE

Adapt, do not adopt. Real situations are messier than any PDF. Change the labels, skip steps, combine frameworks. The test is not whether you followed the steps. It is whether you made a better decision than you would have made without it.

A NOTE ON THE KNOWN TENSIONS SECTION

When two frameworks conflict, turn to the Known Tensions page at the back before deciding which takes precedence.

FRONT MATTER

Navigation

Common Journeys

If your situation matches one below, follow the stage sequence shown

HOW TO USE THIS TABLE

Each row is a common professional situation. The stages listed show the recommended sequence of thinking. Not every stage applies to every journey. Start at the leftmost stage shown and follow the sequence. The frameworks named are the primary ones for that stage in that context.

THE NINE JOURNEYS

JOURNEY	STAGE SEQUENCE AND PRIMARY FRAMEWORKS	EXIT CONDITION
Strategic Planning and Growth	**S1:** PESTLE, Porter's **S2:** SWOT, 7S **S3:** Blue Ocean, Three Horizons **S4:** MECE, Risk Matrix **S5:** OKRs, RACI **S6:** Pyramid	Three to five measurable OKRs committed to paper. Stop analysing and start executing.
Leading Organisational Change	**S1:** Cynefin **S2:** SCARF, 7S **S3:** BATNA **S4:** Risk Matrix **S5:** Kotter, ADKAR **S6:** Radical Candor **S7:** Atomic Habits	The new behaviour runs without you reminding people. Go back to Kotter Step 8 if not.
Launching a New Product	**S1:** JTBD, Porter's **S2:** Design Thinking **S3:** Blue Ocean, BMC **S4:** RICE **S5:** Agile, RACI **S6:** CO-STAR **S7:** HITL	A prototype tested with real users and a prioritised backlog ready for sprint one.
Resolving Team Conflict	**S1:** Cynefin **S2:** TKI, SCARF, GRPI **S3:** Six Hats **S4:** MECE **S5:** REACH, CLEAR **S6:** SBI-AR **S7:** GROW	The conflict is resolved when both parties have re-established a human connection, not just agreed.
Making a High-Stakes Decision	**S1:** Cynefin **S2:** SWOT, Porter's **S3:** Six Hats, BATNA **S4:** Risk Matrix, MECE **S5:** RACI, PACE **S6:** Pyramid	You can state the decision, why it was chosen over the alternatives, and who owns what next.
Developing a Person	**S2:** Situational Leadership, SCARF **S3:** Radical Candor **S5:** CLEAR **S6:** SBI-AR **S7:** GROW, Atomic Habits	The person has a self-directed development plan and is no longer waiting for your input to move.
Improving Customer Experience	**S1:** JTBD **S2:** Design Thinking, RCA **S3:** First Principles **S4:** RICE **S5:** Agile, RACI **S6:** What-So What **S7:** HITL	A ranked improvement list with RICE scores, ready to build.
Solving a Recurring Problem	**S1:** Cynefin **S2:** RCA, 5 Whys **S3:** First Principles, Six Hats **S4:** MECE **S5:** PACE, REACH **S6:** Pyramid **S7:** GTD	You can articulate the root cause and its corrective action in one sentence. If you cannot, keep digging.
Launching a New Project	**S1:** SWOT **S2:** GRPI, Triple Constraint **S3:** BMC **S4:** RICE **S5:** RACI, PACE, Agile **S6:** Pyramid **S7:** OKRs	The backlog is built, sprint one is planned, and every deliverable has a single Accountable owner.

1

STAGE ONE

Name the Problem

"What kind of problem is this?"

REALITY CHECK

The most expensive mistake in professional life is solving the wrong problem with great energy.

Before you reach for any tool, you need to know what you are actually dealing with. Is this a strategic question or an execution failure? A people problem or a process problem? Known territory or genuinely uncertain ground? The frameworks in this stage do one job: they stop you from jumping to solutions too early. Spend five minutes longer in the problem space than feels comfortable. It will save you weeks.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Is the environment uncertain and fast-changing?	**Cynefin first**
→ Is the problem external, about markets or competition?	**PESTLE, then Porter's**
→ Do you need a snapshot of where you stand right now?	**SWOT**
→ Do you know the market but not the customer?	**Jobs-to-be-Done**
→ Is this a known, repeatable situation?	**Skip Stage 1, go to Stage 2**

STAGE 1 · NAME THE PROBLEM

Cynefin Framework

Sense-making and decision context · David Snowden

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

Not all problems are the same kind of problem. Applying a best practice to a complex situation is just as dangerous as experimenting when a clear answer already exists. The Cynefin framework gives you a map of four problem domains, each requiring a fundamentally different approach. Before you decide what to do, decide what kind of situation you are in. That single step prevents most strategic errors.

THE FRAMEWORK

Clear

Cause and effect are obvious. Best practices apply. Sense the situation, categorise it, respond with the known solution. Example: onboarding a new employee using a standard checklist.

Complicated

Cause and effect exist but require expertise to see. Analyse, bring in experts, apply good practice. Example: diagnosing a complex technical bug requiring a senior engineer.

Complex

Cause and effect only visible in retrospect. Probe with safe experiments, sense emerging patterns, respond. Example: launching a product in a rapidly evolving market.

Chaotic

No discernible cause and effect. Act immediately to establish order, sense where stability exists, respond to dampen turbulence. Example: a major system outage in production.

Disorder

You do not know which domain applies. This is the most dangerous state. Break the situation into parts and assign each part to one of the four domains. Never make decisions while in Disorder.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We will apply our standard project methodology to this market entry."

STRONG

"This is a Complex situation. We run three small experiments before committing to a direction."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating every problem as Complicated because it feels reassuring to bring in experts and analyse. Complex problems do not yield to analysis. They yield to experimentation. If you keep analysing a Complex situation you will produce a very thorough justification for the wrong answer.

WORKS WELL WITH

First Principles Thinking Use in Complex domain where assumptions need dismantling before solutions emerge

Design Thinking The probe-sense-respond loop of Complex maps directly to Design Thinking's prototype and test stages

Kotter's 8 Steps Match your change management approach to the Cynefin domain the change lives in

OUTPUT

A categorisation of your situation as Clear, Complicated, Complex, or Chaotic before any solution work begins.

AVOID WHEN

You are already deep in execution and need to act. Categorise first next time.

STAGE 1 · NAME THE PROBLEM

PESTLE Analysis

Macro-environmental scanning · Strategic planning foundation

Diagnostic

Deep

CONCEPT

Most strategic mistakes are caused by external forces the organisation never saw coming. PESTLE is your systematic scan of the macro-environment. The goal is not to fill every box but to identify the two or three forces most likely to affect your strategy in the next one to three years.

THE FRAMEWORK

FACTOR	WHAT TO EXAMINE	EXAMPLE SIGNAL
Political	Government policy, political stability, trade regulations, tax policy	Upcoming elections, trade agreements, subsidy changes
Economic	Inflation, interest rates, growth rates, exchange rates, disposable income	Recession risk, currency shifts, rising input costs
Social	Demographics, cultural trends, lifestyle shifts, consumer attitudes	Ageing population, remote work shift, ethical sourcing demand
Technological	Emerging technology, automation, R&D trends, cybersecurity	AI adoption, automation possibilities, data regulation
Legal	Current and upcoming laws, employment law, industry regulation	New data privacy laws, labour regulation changes, licensing
Environmental	Climate impact, sustainability pressures, waste regulation, ESG expectations	Carbon reporting, green supply chain pressure

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We completed the PESTLE and filled in all six sections with comprehensive notes."

STRONG

"The two forces most likely to affect our strategy are the new data privacy regulation and the shift to AI-assisted workflows. We are planning around those."

ANTI-PATTERN

Spending weeks filling every box with equal depth. PESTLE is for insight, not completion. Stop when you find the forces that genuinely matter.

WORKS WELL WITH

SWOT PESTLE feeds the Opportunities and Threats quadrants of SWOT directly

Porter's Five Forces PESTLE scans the macro-environment; Porter's zooms into competitive industry dynamics

Three Horizons Map PESTLE forces to the horizon they most affect: current, emerging, or future

OUTPUT

A shortlist of the two or three external macro-forces most likely to affect your strategy in the planning period.

AVOID WHEN

You are solving an internal operational problem with no significant external dimension.

STAGE 1 · NAME THE PROBLEM

Porter's Five Forces

Diagnostic

Deep

Industry attractiveness and competitive intensity · Michael E. Porter

CONCEPT

Profitability is not just about your product or your team. It is about the power dynamics of the industry you operate in. Porter's Five Forces maps where power sits in your competitive landscape and where you are leaking leverage. Before you build a strategy, understand the structural forces shaping what is even possible in your industry.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **Threat of New Entrants**
   Can anyone set up shop tomorrow? High risk if: low entry costs, no regulations, no IP protection, no brand loyalty required. Low risk if: high capital requirements, strong network effects, regulatory barriers.
2. **Bargaining Power of Buyers**
   Can your customers force prices down? High risk if: few large customers, product is a commodity, switching costs are low. Low risk if: customers are fragmented and your product is differentiated.
3. **Bargaining Power of Suppliers**
   Can they raise prices on you? High risk if: one or few suppliers for a critical input, switching costs are high. Low risk if: many suppliers exist and inputs are standardised.
4. **Threat of Substitutes**
   Can customers solve the same problem a different way? Example: Zoom is a substitute for business travel. High risk if: cheaper alternatives exist or technology is shifting the basis of the solution.
5. **Competitive Rivalry**
   How intense is the fight? High risk if: many equal-sized competitors, slow market growth, high fixed costs forcing price wars. Low risk if: the market is growing and differentiation is strong.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Our main competitors are X, Y, and Z. We need to differentiate from them."

STRONG

"Buyer power is our biggest structural problem. Three customers represent 60 percent of revenue. We need to diversify before we can negotiate on price."

ANTI-PATTERN

Focusing only on Competitive Rivalry and ignoring the other four forces. Most industries are disrupted not by existing competitors but by substitutes or new entrants that the incumbent never took seriously.

WORKS WELL WITH

PESTLE PESTLE identifies macro forces; Porter's shows how those forces manifest in your specific industry

Blue Ocean Strategy Porter's tells you how bad the red ocean is; Blue Ocean helps you escape it

SWOT Porter's output feeds directly into the Threats and Opportunities sections of SWOT

OUTPUT

An assessment of which of the five forces poses the greatest structural threat to your profitability right now.

AVOID WHEN

You are deliberately creating a Blue Ocean where competition is irrelevant by design.

STAGE 1 · NAME THE PROBLEM

SWOT Analysis

Internal and external snapshot · Strategic planning foundation

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

SWOT is the most used and most misused framework in business. Used well, it surfaces strategic choices worth making. Used badly, it is a list of obvious facts that leads nowhere. The strategic options you generate from matching quadrants are the real output.

THE FRAMEWORK

STRENGTHS: INTERNAL, POSITIVE

What do you do exceptionally well? What advantages do competitors not have? Strong brand, deep expertise, proprietary technology.

WEAKNESSES: INTERNAL, NEGATIVE

Where do you fall short? Be honest. Outdated systems, high turnover, thin margins, skill gaps in the team.

OPPORTUNITIES: EXTERNAL, POSITIVE

What external factors could you leverage? Growing market, competitor weakness, regulatory change in your favour, new technology.

THREATS: EXTERNAL, NEGATIVE

What external factors could hurt you? New entrants, rising costs, regulation, shifting behaviour, substitutes emerging nearby.

THE STRATEGIC MOVE: MATCH THE QUADRANTS

SO: use Strengths to capture Opportunities. ST: use Strengths against Threats. WO: fix Weaknesses to capture Opportunities. WT: reduce Weaknesses and avoid Threats. Pick two or three moves and test them.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We have great people (S), but slow processes (W), and AI is an opportunity (O)."

STRONG

"SO move: use our data expertise (S) to build an AI-powered product before the market consolidates (O)."

ANTI-PATTERN

Listing facts without generating strategy. A SWOT with twenty bullet points and no SO, ST, WO, or WT moves is a description of a situation, not an analysis of it. If you cannot generate at least three strategic options from your SWOT, you have not done the real work yet.

WORKS WELL WITH

PESTLE Run PESTLE first to populate the Opportunities and Threats quadrants with rigour

OKRs The strategic options from SWOT become the Objectives in your OKR cycle

Blue Ocean Strategy If Threats and Weaknesses dominate, Blue Ocean helps you reframe the competitive space entirely

OUTPUT

Two or three strategic options generated from matching the quadrants, ready to test or prioritise.

AVOID WHEN

You just want to list facts about your situation without committing to any strategic choices.

STAGE 1 · NAME THE PROBLEM

Jobs-to-be-Done

Diagnostic

Quick

Customer progress and motivation · Clayton Christensen

CONCEPT

People do not buy products. They hire them to make progress in their lives. If you understand the job being hired for, you understand what the product truly competes with. Most product failures trace back to building a solution for a job nobody was actually trying to do.

THE FRAMEWORK

The Functional Job

The practical task the customer is trying to accomplish. "Get me from A to B." "Help me understand this data." "Make this process faster." This is the obvious layer most teams stop at.

The Emotional Job

How the customer wants to feel while getting the functional job done. "Feel in control." "Feel confident." "Feel calm." Products that ignore this layer get abandoned for ones that do not.

The Social Job

How the customer wants to be perceived by others. "Look competent to my team." "Appear innovative to my peers." This is the layer that drives premium pricing and loyalty.

The Struggle: where innovation lives

Innovation comes from finding where the customer struggles with existing solutions. No struggle means no opportunity. Find the friction and build there.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Our target customer is a 35-45 year old professional who uses productivity software."

STRONG

"They are hiring our tool to feel in control of an overwhelming workload without looking disorganised to their manager."

ANTI-PATTERN

Stopping at the functional job and building features around it. Features satisfy functional jobs. Loyalty comes from the emotional and social ones that most teams ignore.

WORKS WELL WITH

Design Thinking JTBD tells you what job to design for; Design Thinking gives you the process to design the solution

Blue Ocean Strategy Unmet JTBD struggles are often the clearest signal of where a blue ocean exists

Business Model Canvas The Value Propositions block of the BMC should be written in JTBD language

OUTPUT

A clear statement of the functional, emotional, and social job the customer is hiring your product to do.

AVOID WHEN

You are analysing demographic data for ad targeting. JTBD is about motivation, not demographics.

STAGE 1 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You have been asked to build a growth strategy for a traditional business entering a new market. Everyone wants to jump straight to the plan. Here is why you need Stage 1 first, and how the frameworks sequence.

1 **Cynefin: what kind of problem is this new market entry?**

Is this Complicated (you need experts to analyse it) or Complex (nobody knows yet and you need experiments)? If Complex, your planning horizon shortens dramatically. You are not building a five-year plan. You are designing three small bets to run in the next 90 days.

2 **PESTLE: what external forces will shape this market?**

Before you look at competitors, look at the terrain. Are there regulatory forces that could close the market? Economic conditions that affect your customer's ability to spend? Technology shifts that change the basis of competition? Surface the two or three forces that matter most.

3 **Porter's Five Forces: is this market worth entering?**

Now zoom into the industry. Where does power sit? If buyer power is extreme and substitutes are readily available, you need a genuinely differentiated offering or a niche position. If the industry is attractive, proceed. If not, this is the moment to ask whether you are solving the right problem.

4 **SWOT: where do you actually stand?**

Now bring the internal picture in. Your Opportunities and Threats are already populated from PESTLE and Porter's. Add your Strengths and Weaknesses honestly. Then generate the SO, ST, WO, and WT moves. These become the candidate strategies you will take into Stage 3.

5 **Jobs-to-be-Done: what does the customer actually want?**

Before you commit to any strategy, validate that you understand the job your target customer is trying to get done. Many market entries fail not because the market was wrong but because the product was solving the functional job while ignoring the emotional and social ones that drive real purchase decisions.

THE PRINCIPLE

Strategy is the art of sacrifice. You cannot know what to sacrifice until you understand the landscape, the industry, your position, and the customer. Stage 1 gives you all four.

EXIT CONDITION You are done with Stage 1 when you can name the type of problem you are facing, the two or three external forces that matter most, and the job your customer is actually trying to get done. If any of those three is missing, stay in Stage 1.

2

STAGE TWO

Understand It Deeply

"What is really going on here?"

REALITY CHECK

The most expensive mistake you can make is solving the wrong problem brilliantly.

You know what kind of problem it is. Now you need to understand it properly before you start generating solutions. This is the stage most professionals skip because it feels slow. It is not. A wrong diagnosis costs ten times more than the time it takes to get it right. The frameworks here are your diagnostic instruments. Use them to find the real pain, not just the visible symptom.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Is the problem rooted in people, trust, or resistance?	**SCARF first**
→ Is there active conflict between people or teams?	**TKI**
→ Is the team unclear on goals, roles, or how to work together?	**GRPI**
→ Is the whole organisation feeling misaligned or stuck?	**McKinsey 7S**
→ Is something recurring that should not be?	**Root Cause Analysis**
→ Is a project in trouble on scope, time, or cost?	**Triple Constraint**
→ Is a person underperforming or disengaged?	**Situational Leadership**

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

SCARF Model

Trust and psychological safety · David Rock

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

Why is this person shutting down? Why does the room go quiet every time this topic comes up? The answer is almost always one of five things. The brain treats social threats exactly like physical ones: and when it senses danger, it stops cooperating. The SCARF model names the five domains that trigger this response. Learn to see them and you will understand resistance you could never explain before.

THE FRAMEWORK

Status
Relative importance. Threat: public criticism, unsolicited advice. Reward: recognition, ask for their opinion.

Certainty
Ability to predict. Threat: ambiguity, "we need to talk." Reward: clear timelines, transparency.

Autonomy
Control over work. Threat: micromanagement, rigid rules. Reward: choice in how work gets done.

Relatedness
Safety with others. Threat: exclusion, us vs them. Reward: empathy, inclusion.

Fairness
Perception of fair exchange. Threat: inconsistency, broken promises, pay gaps. Reward: transparent decisions, equal rules for all.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"I told them clearly what was changing and expected them to get on board."

STRONG
"I mapped which domain felt most threatened and addressed that specifically before the meeting."

ANTI-PATTERN

Applying SCARF after you have already triggered the threat response. The model is most powerful before you walk into the room, not as a repair tool after trust has cracked.

WORKS WELL WITH

Radical Candor Reduce SCARF threats first, then earn the right to challenge directly

TKI SCARF explains why someone defaults to Avoiding or Competing in conflict

Kotter Step 1 Creating urgency without triggering Certainty threats requires deliberate SCARF mapping

OUTPUT
A checklist of social threats to minimise before your next conversation.

AVOID WHEN
Troubleshooting a purely technical failure with no human dimension involved.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

Thomas-Kilmann Model

Diagnostic

Quick

Conflict resolution styles · Kenneth Thomas & Ralph Kilmann

CONCEPT

When conflict hits, most people react from habit, not from choice. They avoid, or they compete, or they cave: and they do it the same way every time regardless of whether it works. The TKI model maps five distinct conflict styles across two dimensions: how much you assert your own needs, and how much you accommodate others. Understanding your default style is the first step to choosing a better one.

THE FRAMEWORK

COMPETING
High assertiveness, low cooperation. You pursue your goals at the other's expense. Use when a quick decisive call is vital and the stakes are high.

COLLABORATING
High assertiveness, high cooperation. You work together for a win-win. Best for complex problems where both parties' needs genuinely matter.

COMPROMISING
Moderate both. Both sides give something up. Use when a quick acceptable fix is needed and a perfect solution isn't possible.

AVOIDING
Low assertiveness, low cooperation. You sidestep the issue. Use when tensions are too high, or the issue is genuinely minor.

Accommodating
Low assertiveness, high cooperation. You yield to the other party. Use when you realise you are wrong, or when preserving the relationship matters more than the outcome.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"I just try to keep the peace and avoid conflict wherever possible."

STRONG
"I chose Collaborating here because both teams have valid needs and we need a lasting solution."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating your default style as the right style for every situation. Avoiding feels safe but denies real issues. Competing feels decisive but destroys trust. The TKI only works if you are honest about which mode you are actually in.

WORKS WELL WITH

SCARF SCARF reveals why someone is in Avoiding or Competing mode

GROW Once you have identified the style gap, use GROW to coach the person toward Collaborating

SBI-AR Use SBI-AR to name the behaviour before discussing the conflict style

OUTPUT
A conscious choice of conflict mode rather than a default reaction.

AVOID WHEN
You are in a genuine crisis requiring immediate command: analyse styles later.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

GRPI Model

Team health diagnosis · Richard Beckhard

Diagnostic

Deep

CONCEPT

When a team is underperforming, the instinct is to fix the relationships. Usually that is the wrong place to start. GRPI gives you a structured way to identify exactly which layer of the team is broken. It works top-down: clarity problems at the top level cascade into dysfunction at every level below. Fix the highest broken layer first.

THE FRAMEWORK

G **Goals. Is there a shared understanding of purpose?**
Are objectives clear, agreed upon, and compelling? Can every team member articulate them in the same way? If not, everything built on top of this layer is unstable.

R **Roles. Does everyone know who owns what?**
Are individual responsibilities and decision rights clearly defined? Ambiguity here creates duplicated effort, dropped tasks, and quiet resentment about who should have done what.

P **Processes. How does the team actually work together?**
Are communication norms, decision-making processes, and conflict resolution approaches established and followed? Poor processes create friction even when Goals and Roles are clear.

I **Interpersonal. Is there a foundation of trust?**
Can people disagree safely? Is feedback given and received constructively? Interpersonal issues are the hardest to fix and are often symptoms of unresolved problems in G, R, or P above.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"The team has trust issues: we need a team-building day."

STRONG

"The G layer is broken: people have different definitions of success. Fix that first."

ANTI-PATTERN

Starting at the Interpersonal layer when the real problem is in Goals or Roles. Team-building activities on top of role ambiguity produce temporary warmth and lasting confusion. Diagnose top-down before you intervene.

WORKS WELL WITH

SCARF Use SCARF to understand why the Interpersonal layer has broken down

RACI Once GRPI identifies a Roles problem, RACI gives you the tool to fix it

OKRs If Goals are unclear, OKRs give you the structure to make them measurable and shared

OUTPUT

A diagnosis of exactly which layer (G, R, P, or I) is broken and needs attention first.

AVOID WHEN

The team is brand new and has not yet had the chance to develop friction worth diagnosing.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

McKinsey 7S Framework

Organisational alignment · Tom Peters & Robert Waterman

Diagnostic

Deep

CONCEPT

Your strategy is clear. Your team is capable. And yet the organisation is not moving. The McKinsey 7S framework is for this exact situation. It maps seven interdependent elements that must all be aligned for strategy to land. Change one without adjusting the others and you will wonder why nothing sticks. Use it to find the specific element that is out of sync.

THE FRAMEWORK

ELEMENT	TYPE	DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION
Strategy	Hard	How does the organisation plan to win? Is this understood at every level?
Structure	Hard	How is the organisation divided? Do reporting lines support the strategy?
Systems	Hard	What processes and information flows enable daily work? Are they fit for purpose?
Shared Values	Core	What does the organisation truly believe in? Do behaviours match the stated values?
Skills	Soft	What does the organisation do well? Where are the capability gaps?
Style	Soft	How do leaders behave? Does leadership style match what the strategy demands?
Staff	Soft	Do we have the right people? How are they developed, motivated, and retained?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"The strategy isn't landing: communication must be the problem."

STRONG

"The Strategy changed but the Systems haven't: that is the specific misalignment blocking us."

ANTI-PATTERN

Using 7S to produce a comprehensive analysis when you need a specific diagnosis. The model is for finding the misaligned element, not for documenting all seven in equal depth. Stop when you find the blockage.

WORKS WELL WITH

Kotter's 8 Steps 7S identifies what needs to change; Kotter gives you the process to change it

ADKAR Once structural misalignment is found, ADKAR helps individuals navigate the transition

GRPI 7S is organisation-wide; GRPI zooms into team-level dysfunction

OUTPUT

Identification of the specific misaligned element that is blocking your strategy.

AVOID WHEN

You need a quick fix for a single symptom. 7S is a systemic tool, not a patch.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

Root Cause Analysis

Diagnostic

Quick

5 Whys & Fishbone Diagram · Sakichi Toyoda / Kaoru Ishikawa

CONCEPT

Every recurring problem has a symptom you can see and a root cause you cannot. Fixing the symptom buys time. Fixing the root cause solves the problem. Root Cause Analysis gives you two tools for peeling back the layers: the 5 Whys for focused linear problems, and the Fishbone Diagram for complex problems with multiple contributing factors.

THE 5 WHYS: FOR FOCUSED PROBLEMS

1. State the problem clearly. "The server crashed."
2. Ask Why. Keep the answer factual, not interpretive. "The hard drive ran out of space."
3. Ask Why again. "Log files were not being purged automatically."
4. Ask Why again. "The purging script failed because the service account expired."
5. Root cause found: "No monitoring exists for critical service account expiry." Fix this: not the crash.

FISHBONE: FOR COMPLEX, MULTI-FACTOR PROBLEMS

Draw the problem at the head. Branch out into major cause categories: People, Process, Technology, Environment, Measurement, Materials. Under each branch, add specific causes. The Fishbone prevents the team from blaming a single factor when the problem is systemic.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We fixed the server crash by upgrading storage." (Symptom patched, root cause untouched.)

STRONG

"We implemented automated monitoring for all critical service accounts." (Root cause eliminated.)

ANTI-PATTERN

Stopping at the first comfortable answer. "Human error" is almost never a root cause: it is a symptom of a system that allowed the error. Keep asking why until you reach a process or system failure you can actually fix.

WORKS WELL WITH

GRPI Use RCA to find why a team process keeps failing

Design Thinking RCA diagnoses the problem; Design Thinking generates the solution

Risk Assessment Matrix Once the root cause is known, assess its likelihood and impact before acting

OUTPUT

Identification of the single root cause, not just a symptom, with a corrective action.

AVOID WHEN

You are in a live crisis: stop the bleeding first, run RCA after the situation is stable.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

Triple Constraint

The Iron Triangle · Project management foundation

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

Every project is in trouble. The question is which constraint is creating the pressure. The Triple Constraint model states that Scope, Time, and Cost are inextricably linked: tighten one and you put pressure on the others. Quality sits at the centre and is affected by every adjustment. Understanding which constraint has shifted is the first step to an honest conversation with your stakeholders.

THE FRAMEWORK

Scope. What

The work to be done and what the project will deliver. Adding scope without adjusting time or cost is the single most common cause of project failure.

Time. When

The schedule and deadlines. Compressing time without reducing scope or adding cost always reduces quality. The deadline is rarely as fixed as it appears.

Cost. How Much

The budget including all resources. Cutting cost without adjusting scope or extending time produces exactly what you paid for.

Quality. How Well (the centre)

Not a side of the triangle: the outcome that all three constraints directly affect. Define your quality standard first, then negotiate the constraints around it. Never treat quality as the variable to adjust last.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We need to add this feature and still hit the original deadline." (No trade-off acknowledged.)

STRONG

"Adding this scope means we need two more weeks or an additional resource. Which do you prefer?"

ANTI-PATTERN

Accepting changes to one constraint without explicitly negotiating the others. Every scope change is a project renegotiation. Treat it as one.

WORKS WELL WITH

RICE Model Use RICE to prioritise which scope items survive when constraints tighten

Power/Interest Grid Identify which stakeholders need to approve constraint trade-offs

Risk Assessment Matrix Map the risks introduced by each constraint trade-off before committing

OUTPUT

A conscious trade-off decision with all affected parties aligned: e.g., "we delay to keep scope."

AVOID WHEN

Quality is genuinely negotiable: it almost never should be, which is why this rarely applies.

STAGE 2 · UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

Situational Leadership

Hersey-Blanchard Model · Paul Hersey & Ken Blanchard

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

There is no best leadership style. There is only the right style for this person on this task right now. Leaders who manage everyone the same way are either micromanaging their best people or abandoning their newest ones. Situational Leadership gives you a diagnostic to read where someone is: in terms of competence and commitment: and match your approach accordingly.

THE FRAMEWORK: DIAGNOSE THEN MATCH

READINESS LEVEL	WHAT YOU SEE	YOUR STYLE	WHAT YOU DO
D1. Beginner	High enthusiasm, low competence. Eager but inexperienced.	**S1 Directing**	Give specific instructions and close supervision. Tell them exactly what, how, and when.
D2. Learner	Low commitment, growing competence. Struggling and frustrated.	**S2 Coaching**	Direct the task but explain the why. Encourage input. Rebuild confidence through small wins.
D3. Capable	Variable commitment, high competence. Skilled but cautious or bored.	**S3 Supporting**	Facilitate and encourage. Ask how you can help. Do not direct: they know how.
D4. Expert	High commitment, high competence. Self-reliant and motivated.	**S4 Delegating**	Define the outcome and get out of the way. Micromanaging here destroys engagement.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I give everyone autonomy. I trust my team." (Applied to a D1 who needed direction.)

STRONG

"She is D3 on this task: highly capable but second-guessing herself. I shifted to S3 and stopped directing."

ANTI-PATTERN

Diagnosing the person rather than the task. Readiness levels are task-specific. Your best engineer (D4 on code) may be a D1 on client presentations. Always assess the specific task, not the person's overall capability.

WORKS WELL WITH

GROW Use GROW for D3 and D4 who need coaching rather than direction

CLEAR When delegating to D4, use CLEAR to set expectations without micromanaging

Radical Candor Feedback style should match the readiness level too

OUTPUT

A decision on which leadership style (S1-S4) to use for a specific person on a specific task.

AVOID WHEN

Standard operating procedures apply regardless of individual ability: follow the process.

STAGE 2 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You have just taken over a team that is missing every deadline. Your instinct is to look at the process. Stop. The process is probably not the real problem.

Here is how the Stage 2 frameworks sequence in a situation like this, and why the order matters.

1 **SCARF. Start here, not with process**

Sit with each person individually. Listen for where certainty or autonomy feels threatened. Ask about their experience of the team, not the deadlines. What you hear in the first ten minutes will tell you more than any process audit.

2 **TKI. Read the conflict style**

Once you know which SCARF domains are threatened, you understand why people behave as they do. Avoiding means Certainty or Status is threatened. Competing means Autonomy or Fairness is at stake. TKI tells you what you are dealing with before you try to change it.

3 **Situational Leadership. Read each person's readiness**

Assess each team member on the specific tasks they are struggling with. Are they D1 (new to this work) or D3 (capable but disengaged)? Your leadership style must match their readiness, not your preference.

4 **GRPI. Now look at the structure**

Only after you understand the human layer do you examine the structural one. Is the real problem unclear goals, undefined roles, broken processes, or damaged relationships? Most teams have more than one. Rank by severity and tackle the highest layer first.

5 **Root Cause Analysis. Find the system failure**

Now use the 5 Whys to trace the deadline failures to their root. What looked like a process problem is almost always a role clarity problem, and what looked like a role problem has a trust deficit underneath it.

THE PRINCIPLE

Never run a process diagnosis on a trust problem. The tools will give you answers: but they will be the wrong answers about the wrong thing.

EXIT CONDITION You are done with Stage 2 when you can name the specific domain, role, process, or system failure causing the problem in one clear sentence. If you cannot write it, keep digging.

3

STAGE THREE

Generate Options

"What could you do?"

REALITY CHECK

Most professionals generate two options and call it a choice. That is not strategy. That is a coin flip with extra steps.

You understand the problem. Now you need to think wider before you think narrower. The frameworks in this stage force your thinking into territory you would not naturally visit. Some will feel uncomfortable. That discomfort is the signal that you are doing it right. The goal here is not to find the answer. It is to make sure you have not missed a better one before you commit.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Do you need to think from multiple angles as a group?	**Six Thinking Hats**
→ Are you trying to find a genuinely new market position?	**Blue Ocean Strategy**
→ Is the problem too entangled in existing assumptions?	**First Principles Thinking**
→ Do you need to design around a real human need?	**Design Thinking**
→ Are you planning across short and long term simultaneously?	**Three Horizons**
→ Do you need to redesign the whole business logic?	**Business Model Canvas**
→ Are you in a negotiation or facing a difficult choice?	**BATNA**

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

Six Thinking Hats

Parallel thinking for groups · Edward de Bono

Generative

Quick

CONCEPT

Most group discussions fail because everyone is in different thinking modes at once. One person raises risks while another generates ideas. The result is argument, not progress. Six Thinking Hats fixes this by having everyone think in parallel, one mode at a time.

THE FRAMEWORK

White Hat: Facts
What do we know for certain? What data do we have and what is missing? Facts and known gaps only.

Red Hat: Emotions
How do we feel? No justification required. Red Hat gives gut reactions a legitimate place in the conversation.

Black Hat: Caution
What could go wrong? What are the risks? Most valuable when used in its proper turn, not as a default.

Yellow Hat: Optimism
What are the benefits? Why could this work? Forces the group to find genuine value before criticising.

Green Hat: Creativity
What new ideas exist? What alternatives have we not considered? No judgment during Green Hat.

Blue Hat: Process
The facilitator hat. Sets the agenda, manages the sequence, and decides which hat comes next. Always opens and closes.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We brainstormed for an hour but kept going in circles and nobody agreed on anything."

STRONG

"We ran White then Yellow then Black. By the time we hit Black Hat, the risks felt manageable because we had already established the value."

ANTI-PATTERN

Letting the Black Hat dominate by running it too early. If you open with risks before establishing facts and benefits, you kill good ideas prematurely. Always run White and Yellow before Black.

WORKS WELL WITH

MECE After Six Hats generates ideas, use MECE to structure them with no gaps and no overlaps

Risk Assessment Matrix The Black Hat output feeds directly into a structured risk assessment

First Principles Thinking Use Green Hat to surface radical alternatives, then First Principles to build them from the ground up

OUTPUT

A comprehensive view of the problem from six distinct angles with no single mode dominating.

AVOID WHEN

You need a split-second crisis decision. Six Hats is for deliberate thinking, not emergency response.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

Blue Ocean Strategy

Creating uncontested market space · W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

Red oceans are existing markets where competitors fight over the same customers with the same value factors. The water is red because everyone is bleeding. Blue Ocean Strategy asks a different question: what if you stopped competing entirely? Instead of beating the competition, make the competition irrelevant by creating a new market space where you are the only player. Value innovation, not competitive advantage, is the goal.

THE FOUR ACTIONS FRAMEWORK

Eliminate
Which factors that the industry takes for granted should be removed entirely? These are things that add cost but no longer create value for the customer.

Reduce
Which factors should be reduced well below the industry standard? Where is the industry over-delivering on things customers do not actually value?

Raise
Which factors should be raised well above the industry standard? Where does the industry routinely compromise on things customers genuinely care about?

Create
Which factors should be created that the industry has never offered? What entirely new sources of value could you introduce that redefine what the product does?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We need to be better than our competitors on quality, price, and service."

STRONG

"We eliminate the complexity our competitors built in, raise simplicity, and create a self-serve model the category has never seen."

ANTI-PATTERN

Using Blue Ocean to justify incremental product changes. Eliminating one small feature and calling it a blue ocean is not value innovation. The test is whether your strategy canvas looks genuinely different from every competitor in the market. If the lines are similar, you are still in the red ocean.

WORKS WELL WITH

Jobs-to-be-Done Unmet JTBD struggles tell you exactly which factors to Create in the Four Actions Framework

Porter's Five Forces A high Five Forces score is the strongest signal that a Blue Ocean search is worth running

Business Model Canvas Once the blue ocean strategy is defined, use the BMC to design the business model that delivers it

OUTPUT

A completed Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create grid that creates a value curve genuinely distinct from all competitors.

AVOID WHEN

You are optimising an existing product for marginal gains. Blue Ocean is for repositioning, not incrementalism.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

First Principles Thinking

Reasoning from fundamentals · Aristotle, popularised by Elon Musk

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

Most professionals reason by analogy. "This is how it has always been done." Analogy is fast but structurally incapable of producing genuinely new solutions because it never questions the starting assumptions. First Principles breaks a problem to its most basic truths and rebuilds from there, unconstrained by convention.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **Define the goal clearly**
   What are you actually trying to achieve? State it without referencing existing solutions. Not "build a better battery" but "store more energy per kilogram at lower cost."
2. **Break it down to fundamentals**
   What constraints are genuinely non-negotiable? What do physics and economics actually require, versus what convention has simply assumed?
3. **Challenge every assumption**
   Which constraints are real and which are inherited from history? Are complex justifications masking simpler fundamental truths?
4. **Rebuild from scratch**
   Using only the validated fundamental truths, build a new solution. Do not reference existing approaches. Build from what is true, not what is conventional.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Everyone in logistics uses third-party warehouses, so we should too."

STRONG

"The fundamental job is moving goods from origin to customer. What if we question every assumption about how warehousing works?"

ANTI-PATTERN

Applying First Principles to problems that already have well-tested solutions. Not every problem needs rebuilding from scratch. Reserve it for genuinely intractable challenges where analogy has already failed.

WORKS WELL WITH

Design Thinking Use Design Thinking to find the right problem to apply First Principles to

Blue Ocean Strategy First Principles often reveals the Create factors that make a Blue Ocean genuinely distinctive

Cynefin First Principles is most valuable in the Complex domain where existing analogies have stopped working

OUTPUT

A solution built from fundamental truths rather than inherited assumptions, genuinely unconstrained by convention.

AVOID WHEN

A standard best practice already exists and works. Not every problem needs to be rebuilt from zero.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

Design Thinking

Human-centred innovation · IDEO and Stanford d.school

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

Most solutions fail because they were built for a user nobody observed. Design Thinking starts with deep human empathy before generating a single idea, then moves through problem framing, ideation, prototyping, and user testing in a loop. Insights from testing send you back to earlier stages. The iteration is the point.

THE FIVE STAGES

1. **Empathise: observe real users in context**
   Interviews, shadowing, observation. Do not ask people what they want. Watch what they actually do. The gap between what people say and what they do is where insight lives.
2. **Define: frame the problem from the user's perspective**
   Synthesise empathy research into a point-of-view statement. "Elderly users need a way to video call family because existing interfaces are designed for younger users."
3. **Ideate: generate widely before narrowing**
   Brainstorm without judgment. Quantity over quality. Use How Might We questions. Bad ideas often contain the seed of great ones.
4. **Prototype: build to learn, not to finish**
   Build the cheapest possible version. Sketches, cardboard models, clickable mockups. The goal is to make an assumption testable, not to build a product.
5. **Test: put it in front of real users**
   Observe without explaining. Watch where they get stuck. Iterate based on what you learn, not what you hoped to hear.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We surveyed 500 customers and they said they wanted faster checkout."

STRONG

"We watched 10 users try to check out. Every one of them abandoned at the address field. That is the problem."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping Empathise because you think you already understand the user. Every product team believes this. Most are wrong about at least one critical assumption. Empathise first, every time.

WORKS WELL WITH

Jobs-to-be-Done JTBD tells you what job to design for; Design Thinking gives you the process to design it

Agile The Prototype and Test loop of Design Thinking maps directly to Agile sprints

RICE Model After testing, use RICE to prioritise which insights to act on first

OUTPUT

A prototype that has been tested with real users and refined based on observed behaviour, not stated preference.

AVOID WHEN

The problem is well-defined and a known solution already exists. Do not design-think a standard process improvement.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

Three Horizons Framework

Balancing present and future growth · McKinsey and Company

Generative

Quick

CONCEPT

Organisations that only manage today go out of business. Organisations that only plan for the future go broke waiting. The Three Horizons Framework forces you to actively manage all three timeframes simultaneously. The critical insight is that all three horizons must be funded and led in parallel, not in sequence. Waiting until Horizon 1 is stable before investing in Horizon 2 is how incumbents get disrupted.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **Horizon 1: Defend and extend the core (0 to 3 years)**
   Managing and maximising performance of the existing business. Improving efficiency, optimising current products, extending their life. This is where most revenue comes from today. Goal: drive maximum value from what you already have.

2. **Horizon 2: Build emerging opportunities (2 to 5 years)**
   Nurturing new ventures adjacent to the core that are expected to generate substantial revenue in the medium term. These require significant investment to scale. Goal: take promising bets and grow them into real businesses.

3. **Horizon 3: Create future options (5 to 10 plus years)**
   Exploring disruptive ideas that may not generate revenue for years. Experimentation, R and D, identifying nascent trends. Goal: incubate the ideas that will become Horizon 1 businesses in the next decade.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We are focused on our core business right now. We will explore new markets once things stabilise."

STRONG

"We have three H2 bets running alongside the core. Two will probably fail. One needs to become H1 within three years."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating the three horizons as sequential rather than parallel. The organisations that survive disruption are the ones running H2 and H3 bets while H1 is still healthy, not after it starts declining. By the time H1 is obviously failing, it is too late to build H2 from scratch.

WORKS WELL WITH

OKRs Set separate OKRs for each horizon. H1 OKRs optimise; H2 and H3 OKRs explore

RICE Model Use RICE to prioritise which H2 bets to fund when resources are constrained

Blue Ocean Strategy H3 thinking is the natural home for Blue Ocean exploration

OUTPUT

A portfolio of initiatives deliberately balanced across core defence, emerging growth, and future bets.

AVOID WHEN

You are fighting for immediate survival. When H1 is in crisis, focus there first before thinking about H2 and H3.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

Business Model Canvas

Visualising business logic on one page · Alexander Osterwalder

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

The Business Model Canvas puts the entire business logic on one page, making interdependencies visible. It is not a planning document but a thinking tool. Its greatest value is the what-if conversation: change one block and watch how it ripples across the others.

THE NINE BLOCKS

BLOCK	THE QUESTION IT ANSWERS
Customer Segments	Who are we creating value for? Who matters most?
Value Propositions	What value do we deliver? Write this in JTBD language.
Channels	How do we reach our segments? How are we reaching them now?
Customer Relationships	What relationship does each segment expect? Self-service, dedicated, or community?
Revenue Streams	What are customers willing to pay for? How do they pay now and how would they prefer to pay?
Key Resources	What assets do our value propositions require?
Key Activities	What must we do exceptionally well to deliver our value propositions?
Key Partnerships	Who are our key partners and suppliers and what do we acquire from them?
Cost Structure	What are our most important costs? Which resources and activities are most expensive?

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We filled out all nine blocks comprehensively with detailed notes in each."

STRONG

"We ran three versions of the canvas with different revenue models and stress-tested each one."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating the BMC as a form to complete. Every block is an assumption. Identify which assumptions are most uncertain and most critical, then test those first. An untested canvas is fiction.

WORKS WELL WITH

Jobs-to-be-Done JTBD gives you the language for the Value Propositions block. Never fill that block without it.

Blue Ocean Strategy The Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create grid directly reshapes the BMC blocks

Design Thinking Use Design Thinking to validate the Customer Segments and Value Propositions blocks with real users

OUTPUT

A one-page hypothesis of how the business creates, delivers, and captures value, ready to be stress-tested.

AVOID WHEN

You are mapping detailed operational processes or workflows. The BMC is for business logic, not process design.

STAGE 3 · GENERATE OPTIONS

BATNA

Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement · Roger Fisher and William Ury

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

Your power in any negotiation is not determined by how much you want the deal. It is determined by how good your alternative is if it falls through. BATNA is your plan B, the standard against which every proposed agreement must be measured. Knowing it before you enter the room transforms negotiation from hope into strategy.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **Identify your alternatives**
   Brainstorm every possible course of action if this negotiation fails. Do not limit yourself to obvious options.
2. **Evaluate and select the best one**
   Assess each alternative for feasibility, cost, and likelihood of success. The most attractive and realistic option becomes your BATNA.
3. **Define your reservation point**
   Your BATNA sets your walk-away point. Any offer worse than it should be rejected. This is a mathematical floor, not a negotiating position.
4. **Estimate your counterpart's BATNA**
   Understanding their alternatives reveals their leverage. The Zone of Possible Agreement sits between your reservation point and theirs. No overlapping zone means no deal.
5. **Strengthen your BATNA before you negotiate**
   If your BATNA is weak, strengthen it before negotiating. A stronger BATNA gives you more power without confrontation.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We really need this contract so we will be flexible on the terms."

STRONG

"Our BATNA is Vendor B at 15 percent higher cost. Any deal with Vendor A must beat that on total value."

ANTI-PATTERN

Revealing your BATNA when it is weak. Your BATNA is for your benefit, not your counterpart's. If your alternative is poor, do not signal it. Focus on finding solutions better than both parties' alternatives.

WORKS WELL WITH

REACH Framework Use REACH to build the relationship before entering the negotiation. A strong relationship raises both parties' BATNAs.

Risk Assessment Matrix Assess the risks of each alternative before selecting your BATNA

Pyramid Principle When presenting your position, lead with your conclusion and support it with the logic, not the other way around

OUTPUT

A clearly defined walk-away point and a ranked list of alternatives you are genuinely willing to pursue.

AVOID WHEN

The long-term relationship matters more than the immediate deal terms. Optimising your BATNA can damage trust.

STAGE 3 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You are leading a team tasked with finding a new growth strategy for a business whose core market is declining. Everyone has opinions. Nobody agrees. Here is how Stage 3 frameworks sequence to turn that situation into a clear set of options.

1 **Six Thinking Hats: get everyone thinking in the same direction**

Before any framework work begins, run a facilitated Six Hats session. White Hat first to align on the facts. Yellow Hat to surface genuine optimism about what is possible. Black Hat to name the real risks. Green Hat to open up the solution space. This gives you a shared foundation before the analytical work starts.

2 **Three Horizons: sort the options by timeframe**

Take everything that came out of the Green Hat session and place it in H1, H2, or H3. This immediately clarifies which options are about protecting what you have and which are genuine bets on the future. Most teams conflate the two and it stalls every conversation.

3 **Blue Ocean Strategy: pressure-test the H2 and H3 options**

For each serious H2 or H3 candidate, run the Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create grid. Does this option create a genuinely different value curve or is it just a repositioning of what you already do? Ruthlessly eliminate the options that are H1 thinking dressed up as H2.

4 **Jobs-to-be-Done plus Design Thinking: validate the best option with real humans**

Before committing any resources, take the two or three strongest options and build the cheapest possible prototype of each. Put them in front of real customers. What you learn in two weeks of user testing is worth more than two months of internal debate.

THE PRINCIPLE

The purpose of Stage 3 is not to find the answer. It is to ensure you have not committed to a direction before you have seen enough of the option space to make a genuinely informed choice.

EXIT CONDITION You are done with Stage 3 when you have two or three distinct, viable options with fundamentally different risk and reward profiles. If all your options look similar, you have not generated enough range. Go back to Green Hat and First Principles.

4

STAGE FOUR

Decide

"Which path?"

REALITY CHECK

Frameworks are most commonly misused at this stage. People let the tool make the decision. It will not.

You have options. Now you need to choose. What frameworks do here is structure the criteria, surface the risks, and force trade-offs into the open so you can make a clear-eyed call. The decision is still yours. These tools organise your thinking so the choice is made with clarity, not gut alone.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Do you need to structure thinking with no gaps or overlaps?	**MECE Framework**
→ Do you need to prioritise a list of features or tasks?	**RICE Model**
→ Do you need to prioritise your personal time?	**Eisenhower Matrix**
→ Do you need to assess and rank risks before acting?	**Risk Assessment Matrix**
→ Do you need to decide what to hand to AI?	**AI Delegation Matrix**

STAGE 4 · DECIDE

MECE Framework

Checklist

Quick

Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive · McKinsey and Company

CONCEPT

Messy thinking produces messy decisions. MECE is a quality test for the structure of your analysis. Mutually Exclusive means no overlap between categories. Collectively Exhaustive means no gaps. Together they ensure your thinking covers everything it should and nothing twice. Apply it before you present, before you decide, and before you act.

THE FRAMEWORK

Mutually Exclusive

Each category is independent with no overlaps. An item can only fit into one bucket. Example: age segments 0-17, 18-34, 35 plus. No customer falls into two brackets.

Collectively Exhaustive

All possibilities are covered with no gaps. Example: call reasons of Technical Support, Billing, Sales, and Other covers every call type.

The MECE test

Can any item fit into more than one category? (If yes, not mutually exclusive.) Is there any item that fits into none? (If yes, not collectively exhaustive.) Fix whichever fails.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Our segments are SMBs, enterprises, and fast-growing companies." (A fast-growing company can be an SMB.)

STRONG

"Our segments are under 50 employees, 50 to 500, and over 500." (No overlap, no gap.)

ANTI-PATTERN

Applying MECE to a creative brainstorm. Divergent thinking needs overlap and redundancy. MECE is for structuring ideas after they have been generated, not during generation.

WORKS WELL WITH

Pyramid Principle MECE ensures the supporting arguments in your pyramid have no gaps and no overlaps

Six Thinking Hats Use MECE to structure the output after Six Hats generates ideas

RICE Model MECE ensures your prioritisation list is complete before RICE scores it

OUTPUT

A breakdown of the problem or options with no gaps and no overlaps.

AVOID WHEN

You are in a creative brainstorm where divergent, overlapping thinking is exactly what you need.

STAGE 4 · DECIDE

RICE Model

Reach, Impact, Confidence, Effort · Intercom

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Prioritisation by gut feel is how teams build what the loudest person wanted. RICE replaces opinion with a formula that scores every item on four dimensions. It does not make the decision for you but it exposes which items are over- or under-valued before any commitment is made.

THE FRAMEWORK

Reach
How many people will this affect in a given period? Score as a number of users or stakeholders. Example: 2,000 users per quarter.

Impact
How much will this move the goal? Score 3 massive, 2 high, 1 medium, 0.5 low, 0.25 minimal.

Confidence
How sure are you about Reach and Impact? Express as percentage: 100% well-evidenced, 50% speculative, 20% assumption.

Effort
How many person-weeks will this take? This is the denominator. Higher effort means lower score.

The formula
RICE Score = (Reach x Impact x Confidence) / Effort. Rank items by score. Highest scores deserve your attention first.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"We prioritised the dashboard because the CEO mentioned it twice."

STRONG
"The onboarding fix scored 3x higher than the dashboard. We are doing that first."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating the RICE score as the final answer. It is a starting point for conversation. If the model ranks something low that is strategically critical, question your Reach or Impact estimates rather than overriding the framework silently.

WORKS WELL WITH

MECE Ensure your backlog is complete and non-overlapping before running RICE scores

OKRs Score items against OKR contribution, not just user impact

Agile Use RICE to rank the backlog before sprint planning

OUTPUT
A ranked list of features or tasks sorted by RICE score, ready for commitment.

AVOID WHEN
You lack data to estimate Reach or Impact. Scoring guesses produces false precision.

STAGE 4 · DECIDE

Eisenhower Matrix

Urgency vs importance · Dwight D. Eisenhower

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Urgency feels like importance but it is not. Most professionals spend their days in Quadrant 1 fighting fires that Quadrant 2 work would have prevented. The Eisenhower Matrix forces a distinction between what is urgent and what actually matters. The goal is to spend most of your time in Q2, where the highest-leverage work lives.

THE FRAMEWORK

Q1: URGENT AND IMPORTANT

Do immediately. Crises, pressing deadlines, critical failures. Example: a production system outage, a client deadline today.

Q2: NOT URGENT BUT IMPORTANT

Schedule it. Strategic planning, skill development, relationship building, prevention. This is where the highest-leverage work lives. Most professionals neglect it.

Q3: URGENT BUT NOT IMPORTANT

Delegate it. Interruptions, some meetings, requests that feel urgent but do not advance your goals. These masquerade as Q1.

Q4: NOT URGENT, NOT IMPORTANT

Eliminate it. Mindless browsing, low-value emails, tasks that add no real output. Time spent here compounds into stagnation.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I am always busy but never feel like I am making real progress."

STRONG

"I have blocked two hours daily for Q2 work. It is non-negotiable."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating everything as Q1 because it feels important in the moment. If your entire list is Q1, the problem is your criteria, not your workload.

WORKS WELL WITH

GTD Use GTD to capture everything, then Eisenhower to sort by urgency and importance

CLEAR Framework Delegate Q3 tasks using CLEAR to ensure the handoff is clean

OKRs Q2 should map directly to your OKR key results. If it does not, reconsider your Q2 choices.

OUTPUT

A to-do list sorted into Do, Schedule, Delegate, and Eliminate with protected time for Q2.

AVOID WHEN

Everything is genuinely a crisis. When the building is on fire, prioritise by instinct and run the matrix later.

STAGE 4 · DECIDE

Risk Assessment Matrix

Diagnostic

Quick

Likelihood and impact prioritisation · Risk management foundation

CONCEPT

Not all risks deserve equal attention. The Risk Assessment Matrix ranks identified risks by plotting likelihood against potential impact. High likelihood plus high impact demands immediate action. Low likelihood plus low impact can be monitored and forgotten. Focus your mitigation energy where it will have the most effect.

THE FRAMEWORK

ZONE	LIKELIHOOD X IMPACT	ACTION LEVEL	TREATMENT
Red	High x High	Immediate action	Avoid or mitigate urgently. Senior attention required.
Orange	High x Medium or Medium x High	Active management	Mitigate or transfer. Assign owner and timeline.
Green	Low x Low	Monitor only	Accept the risk. Review periodically.

The four treatment strategies

Avoid: eliminate the activity causing the risk. Mitigate: reduce likelihood or impact. Transfer: shift to a third party via insurance or outsourcing. Accept: acknowledge and monitor with no specific action.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We have a risk register with 47 items and no priorities assigned."

STRONG

"We have 3 Red risks with owners and mitigation plans. Everything else is monitored monthly."

ANTI-PATTERN

Building a comprehensive risk register without taking action on critical items. A risk matrix reviewed quarterly in a governance meeting is decoration. The value is in the mitigation actions assigned to Red and Orange risks.

WORKS WELL WITH

SWOT Threats from SWOT become the starting point for risk identification

Triple Constraint Map risks to the constraint they most affect: scope, time, or cost

Kotter Step 1 Red risks are powerful material for creating urgency around a change initiative

OUTPUT

A prioritised risk list in Red, Orange, Green zones with a named owner and treatment for each Red item.

AVOID WHEN

You are dealing with unknown unknowns in a Chaotic Cynefin domain. Act first, assess risks after.

STAGE 4 · DECIDE

AI Delegation Matrix

Deciding what to give AI · Anthropic framework

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

AI is a powerful engine for speed but not every task should go to it. The AI Delegation Matrix helps you decide how to approach a task based on two dimensions: how capable AI models are at this specific task, and how bad it would be if the output were wrong. Map your tasks before starting a project and you will know where AI accelerates and where human judgment is irreplaceable.

THE FRAMEWORK

AUTOMATE

High AI capability, low cost of error. Let AI do 90 to 100 percent. Quick review only. Example: summarising notes, formatting data, drafting generic emails.

AUGMENT

High AI capability, high cost of error. Human in the loop. AI drafts, you audit deeply. Example: coding, strategy documents, legal research.

EXPERIMENT

Low AI capability, low cost of error. Use AI to break creative blocks. Expect to discard most output. Example: brainstorming names, generating wild ideas.

OWN

Low AI capability, high cost of error. Do not use AI. Example: final decisions, performance reviews, delivering bad news, high-stakes negotiation.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I use AI for everything now. It saves so much time." (No judgment about where errors matter.)

STRONG

"Scheduling is Automate, the press release is Augment, naming is Experiment, pricing strategy is Own."

ANTI-PATTERN

Letting AI drift into the Own quadrant by default. Performance reviews, client-facing strategy, and high-stakes communication must remain human-owned. Speed is not a justification for removing accountability.

WORKS WELL WITH

CO-STAR Prompting Use CO-STAR to structure prompts for Automate and Augment quadrant tasks

Human-in-the-Loop Every Augment task should follow the HITL four-step process before output is used

RICE Model Score AI-assisted tasks on Confidence to reflect uncertainty in AI output quality

OUTPUT

Every task in your project mapped to Automate, Augment, Experiment, or Own before work begins.

AVOID WHEN

The task requires high emotional intelligence, lived experience, or full accountability. These are always Own.

STAGE 4 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You are a senior manager with a backlog of 30 things demanding attention and three teams waiting on your decisions. Here is how Stage 4 frameworks sequence to help you cut through the noise and commit to the right things.

1. **MECE: structure the decision space first**

   Before scoring anything, make sure your list of options is complete and non-overlapping. A RICE model run on a poorly structured backlog produces precisely ranked answers to the wrong questions.

2. **Risk Assessment Matrix: surface what could hurt you**

   Before prioritising what to do, identify what could go wrong with each option. Red risks on your highest-RICE items should give you pause. A high-scoring item with a catastrophic downside is not necessarily your best next move.

3. **RICE: score and rank what remains**

   With the structure clean and risks visible, run RICE scores across the remaining options. The ranked output tells you where to commit your team's time. Share it with stakeholders before the decisions are made, not after.

4. **Eisenhower: sort your personal role in what follows**

   Once the team's priorities are set, apply Eisenhower to your own task list. Which decisions genuinely require you and which can you delegate? The best managers decide the right things, not everything.

5. **AI Delegation Matrix: decide what AI handles in execution**

   For every item that moves into action, decide in advance which parts go to AI and which stay human. Making this decision before execution prevents the drift that happens when people reach for AI tools under pressure without thinking about the cost of error.

THE PRINCIPLE

The goal of Stage 4 is not a perfect ranked list. It is a committed decision that everyone understands and can act on. Stop analysing when you have enough clarity to move.

EXIT CONDITION You are done with Stage 4 when you can state the chosen path, why it was chosen over the alternatives, and who owns what next. If any of those three is missing, the decision is not yet complete.

5

STAGE FIVE

Act

"How do you make it happen?"

REALITY CHECK

A perfect plan with average execution loses to an average plan with relentless execution every time.

A decision without execution is just an opinion. This is the stage where most good strategies die, not because they were wrong but because the transition from decision to action was handled badly. The frameworks here answer the questions that execution always throws up: who owns what, how do we stay aligned, and how do we keep moving when things get complicated.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Do you need measurable goals everyone can track?	**OKRs**
→ Do you need to clarify who owns what?	**RACI Matrix**
→ Do you need to delegate without micromanaging?	**CLEAR Framework**
→ Do you need to run better meetings?	**P.A.C.E.**
→ Do you need to manage iterative, fast-moving work?	**Agile / Scrum / Kanban**
→ Do you need buy-in from people you do not manage?	**REACH Framework**
→ Are you leading a large-scale transformation?	**Kotter's 8 Steps then ADKAR**

STAGE 5 · ACT

OKRs

Checklist

Quick

Objectives and Key Results · Andy Grove, popularised by Google

CONCEPT

To-do lists tell you what to do. OKRs tell you why it matters and whether it worked. The Objective is the inspiring destination. The Key Results are the measurable proof that you arrived. If a Key Result has no number, it is not a Key Result. OKRs are not a performance review tool. They are an alignment tool that connects daily work to the organisation's most important bets.

THE FRAMEWORK

Objective: the What

Significant, concrete, action-oriented, and inspiring. It should make people want to contribute. Example: "Launch an MVP that users love and come back to."

Key Results: the How

Three to five measurable outcomes per Objective. Quantitative, time-bound, unambiguous. If it does not have a number, it is a task, not a Key Result.

Scoring OKRs

Score 0.0 to 1.0 at quarter end. A score of 0.6 to 0.7 is success for an ambitious goal. Consistent 1.0s mean your goals are too easy. Consistent 0.2s mean they are not actionable.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

KR: "Improve customer satisfaction." (No number, no timeframe, not measurable.)

STRONG

KR: "Achieve NPS of 45 or above by end of Q3, up from current 31."

ANTI-PATTERN

Setting OKRs that always score 1.0. Consistent perfect scores mean your goals were too easy. OKRs should be ambitious enough that 0.7 feels like a genuine achievement. If the team always hits 1.0, raise the bar.

WORKS WELL WITH

RACI Assign accountability for each Key Result to a single owner using RACI

Three Horizons Set different OKR ambition levels for H1 (optimise), H2 (grow), and H3 (explore)

Agile OKRs set the quarterly direction; Agile sprints determine the weekly path to get there

OUTPUT

One to three ambitious Objectives each with three to five measurable Key Results, scored at quarter end.

AVOID WHEN

You are managing stable business-as-usual operations. OKRs are for change goals, not routine maintenance.

STAGE 5 · ACT

RACI Matrix

Roles and accountability · Project management foundation

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Most project failures are not caused by bad strategy. They are caused by two people thinking someone else owns the same task, or nobody owning it at all. RACI eliminates ambiguity by assigning exactly one of four roles to every person for every deliverable. The rule that matters most: there can only ever be one Accountable per task.

THE FRAMEWORK

Responsible (R)
The person or people who do the work. Multiple Rs are allowed. Example: the developer writing the code for a feature.

Accountable (A)
The single person ultimately answerable for completion. Only one A per task, ever. Example: the Product Manager who owns the feature delivery.

Consulted (C)
People whose input is sought before decisions are made. Two-way communication. Example: the security team reviewing code before release.

Informed (I)
People kept updated after decisions are made. One-way communication. Example: senior leadership receiving a status update after a milestone.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"We all own this together as a team." (No individual accountability, tasks get dropped.)

STRONG
"Priya is A on the launch checklist. Everyone else is R, C, or I on specific items."

ANTI-PATTERN

Assigning multiple Accountables to a single task. When two people are both Accountable, neither truly is. If you need two As, the task is too large and needs to be broken into smaller pieces each with its own single owner.

WORKS WELL WITH

GRPI GRPI diagnoses role confusion; RACI gives you the structure to resolve it

OKRs Assign one Accountable to each Key Result using the RACI logic

CLEAR Use CLEAR to communicate the delegation context when assigning R roles

OUTPUT
A grid confirming exactly one Accountable per task and clear R, C, I assignments for every stakeholder.

AVOID WHEN
The team is two or three people with naturally fluid roles. RACI adds overhead without adding clarity at that scale.

STAGE 5 · ACT

CLEAR Framework

Delegation without micromanaging · Management best practice

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Unclear delegation is the single most common cause of rework. When a manager hands off a task without context, boundaries, or a clear definition of done, they are not delegating. They are offloading. CLEAR is a five-part checklist that takes three extra minutes upfront and saves hours of confusion downstream.

THE FRAMEWORK

C **Context: why does this task matter?**
Explain how it fits into the bigger picture. People work better when they understand the purpose. Example: "This competitor analysis will shape our Q4 pricing strategy."

L **Level of Authority: what can they decide alone?**
Define the boundaries. Can they contact external parties? Approve spend? Or only execute and report back? Example: "Reach out to the sales team but check with me before finalising structure."

E **Expectations: what does done look like?**
Define the deliverable, quality standard, and deadline. Be specific. Example: "A 10-slide deck covering X, Y, Z by next Friday EOD, formatted for an executive audience."

A **Available Resources: what can they use?**
Name the tools, budget, data, and people available. Example: "Use the analytics dashboard and book time with Sarah in Marketing for design input."

R **Review: when and how will you check in?**
Set specific touchpoints upfront. Example: "15-minute check-in Wednesday to review the outline and address early questions."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Can you handle the competitor analysis? Need it by Friday."

STRONG

"Here is the context, your authority level, what done looks like, the resources available, and our check-in on Wednesday."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping CLEAR on tasks you consider simple. The tasks that cause the most rework are always the ones the manager thought were obvious. Use CLEAR every time. It takes three minutes. The conversation it prevents takes three hours.

WORKS WELL WITH

Situational Leadership Adjust the Level of Authority based on the person's readiness level for this task

RACI CLEAR is the conversation you have when assigning the R role in a RACI matrix

Eisenhower Delegate Q3 tasks using CLEAR so the handoff does not create more work than it saves

OUTPUT

A delegated task with defined authority, a clear definition of done, and a scheduled check-in.

AVOID WHEN

The task is high-stakes and errors are intolerable. Stay more directly involved rather than fully delegating.

STAGE 5 · ACT

P.A.C.E. Meetings

Checklist

Quick

Purpose, Agenda, Conduct, End-result · Meeting discipline framework

CONCEPT

Most meetings fail before they start because nobody has defined why the meeting exists. P.A.C.E. is a four-part checklist you apply before scheduling any meeting. If you cannot fill in all four parts, the meeting should not happen. The test: if you can resolve this by email, cancel the meeting.

THE FRAMEWORK

P **Purpose: why are we meeting?**
One sentence. If you cannot state it clearly, cancel the meeting. Example: "Decide on Q3 marketing budget: Go or No-Go on three initiatives."

A **Agenda: what must be covered?**
Specific topics with times and owners. Send in advance with pre-reading. Example: "10:00 Budget overview (Jane, 10 min). 10:10 Initiative A decision (Mark, 15 min)."

C **Conduct: who needs to be there and how will we decide?**
Essential attendees only. Define the decision-maker upfront. Example: "Required: Jane, Mark, Sue. Decision-maker: Sue. Pre-read mandatory."

E **End-result: what leaves the room?**
Named decisions and actions with owners and deadlines. Example: "Q3 budget approved. Mark finalises Initiative A plan by EOW. Jane updates forecast by Monday."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Weekly team sync, 1 hour, recurring, all team members required."

STRONG

"Purpose: decide the launch date. Agenda sent. Decision-maker named. Actions documented before anyone leaves."

ANTI-PATTERN

Running recurring meetings with no defined purpose. A standing weekly sync with no agenda is not a meeting. It is a ritual. Audit your recurring calendar and cancel any meeting that cannot pass the P.A.C.E. test.

WORKS WELL WITH

RACI The Conduct element maps to RACI: who is Accountable for the decision being made in this meeting

Pyramid Principle Structure all presentations in P.A.C.E. meetings with the conclusion first

OKRs Every meeting End-result should connect to a Key Result or a clear blocker removal

OUTPUT

An agenda with a clear purpose and defined outcomes sent before the meeting starts.

AVOID WHEN

The meeting is a casual brainstorm or relationship catch-up where a formal agenda would kill the energy.

STAGE 5 · ACT

Agile: Scrum and Kanban

Generative

Deep

Iterative delivery and flow management · Agile Manifesto, 2001

CONCEPT

Traditional project management assumes you know everything upfront. Agile assumes you do not. It delivers value in small frequent increments, gathers feedback, and adjusts. Use Scrum when work comes in batches. Use Kanban when work flows continuously.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM SCRUM

1. **Sprints: fixed delivery windows of 1 to 4 weeks**
   Each sprint delivers a working increment. No scope changes mid-sprint. Regular rhythm creates predictability.
2. **Product Backlog: the prioritised work queue**
   A ranked list of everything the team might do. Constantly re-prioritised. Use RICE to rank it before each sprint.
3. **Daily Stand-up: 15 minutes, three questions**
   What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? What is blocking you? A coordination ritual, not a status report.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM KANBAN

Kanban Board
Visual columns (To Do, In Progress, Done) showing work state. Makes bottlenecks visible immediately.

WIP Limits
A cap on tasks In Progress at any time. Forces finishing over starting and exposes real team capacity.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"We are Agile. We have standups and a Jira board." (Rituals without discipline.)

STRONG
"We shipped something real every two weeks and adjusted direction twice based on user feedback."

ANTI-PATTERN

Running Agile ceremonies without Agile discipline. Standups that become status reports and sprints that accept mid-cycle scope changes are the appearance of Agile over a waterfall foundation.

WORKS WELL WITH

OKRs OKRs set the quarterly direction; sprints execute against it

RICE Use RICE to rank the backlog before each sprint

Design Thinking Design Thinking discovers what to build; Agile builds it iteratively

OUTPUT
A working increment delivered every sprint and a continuously prioritised backlog reflecting current reality.

AVOID WHEN
Requirements are fixed, sequential, and fully known upfront. Construction and compliance projects rarely benefit from Agile.

STAGE 5 · ACT

REACH Framework

Checklist Quick

Influencing without authority · Leadership best practice

CONCEPT

Most professionals think influence flows from authority. It does not. The people who get things done in complex organisations are the ones who can move others without directing them. REACH gives you a five-step sequence for building genuine influence: start with the relationship, understand their world, then connect your ask to their goals before making it.

THE FRAMEWORK

R **Relate: build connection first**
Find common ground before any business conversation. "How is Project X going?" is not small talk. It is the foundation of trust.

E **Empathise: understand their world**
Ask and genuinely listen. "What are your biggest challenges right now?" You cannot align to their goals if you do not know what they are.

A **Align: link your ask to their goals**
Show the mutual benefit explicitly. "This initiative helps us both achieve X." If there is no genuine alignment, rethink the ask, not the framing.

C **Communicate: present your case clearly**
Be direct. State the issue, the impact, and your proposed solution. Use the Pyramid Principle: conclusion first, then the supporting logic.

H **Help: offer support and be a partner**
"How can I help you make this happen?" Influence is reciprocal. The most influential people in organisations give before they ask.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"I sent them the proposal three times and they still have not responded."

STRONG
"I spent 20 minutes understanding their Q4 pressure first. The conversation took five minutes after that."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping R and E to get straight to the ask. REACH only works in sequence. Going straight to Communicate without Relating and Empathising first is persuasion, not influence. People feel the difference and they resist it.

WORKS WELL WITH

SCARF Use SCARF to diagnose which domain matters most to this person before the REACH conversation

Power/Interest Grid Prioritise who to REACH based on their power and interest in your initiative

BATNA Know your walk-away point before any REACH conversation that involves negotiation

OUTPUT
A connection built on shared goals before any ask is made, with a clear offer of reciprocal help.

AVOID WHEN
You have formal authority and a simple directive is faster and more appropriate for the situation.

STAGE 5 · ACT

Power/Interest Grid

Diagnostic

Quick

Stakeholder engagement strategy · Aubrey Mendelow

CONCEPT

Not all stakeholders deserve the same amount of your time. Treating a peripheral department head the same as your project sponsor is not inclusive. It is inefficient. The Power/Interest Grid maps stakeholders on two axes so you can invest your engagement energy where it will have the most impact.

THE FRAMEWORK

HIGH POWER, HIGH INTEREST
Manage Closely. Full engagement. Keep them satisfied, informed, and involved. Example: project sponsor, main client contact.

HIGH POWER, LOW INTEREST
Keep Satisfied. Enough to keep them on side but not so much you bore them. Example: a senior executive in a peripheral department.

LOW POWER, HIGH INTEREST
Keep Informed. Update regularly. They often have useful detail-level insight. Example: enthusiastic end-users with no decision-making authority.

LOW POWER, LOW INTEREST
Monitor. Minimal communication. Check in periodically. Example: an unrelated department with no stake in the outcome.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"We send the same weekly update email to all 30 stakeholders."

STRONG
"The sponsor gets a weekly call. Peripheral teams get a monthly summary. Each quadrant has its own approach."

ANTI-PATTERN

Placing stakeholders once and never revisiting. Power and interest shift during a project. A Low Interest stakeholder can become High Interest the moment the project affects their team. Re-map after any significant milestone.

WORKS WELL WITH

REACH Use REACH for your High Power, High Interest stakeholders who need genuine influence-building

Kotter Step 2 Build your Guiding Coalition from the High Power, High Interest quadrant

SCARF Understand each key stakeholder's dominant SCARF domain before designing your engagement

OUTPUT
A stakeholder map with a tailored communication and engagement strategy for each quadrant.

AVOID WHEN
The project is small and internal with no meaningful external stakeholder dimension.

STAGE 5 · ACT

Kotter's 8-Step Model

Leading large-scale change · John P. Kotter

Checklist

Deep

CONCEPT

Most change initiatives fail because the human side was underestimated. Kotter's model is a sequential roadmap addressing both structural and emotional elements. Use it alongside ADKAR, which maps each individual's journey.

THE EIGHT STEPS

#	STEP	WHAT IT MEANS IN PRACTICE
1	**Create Urgency**	Show data. Make inaction feel more dangerous than change.
2	**Build a Coalition**	Respected leaders with enough influence to drive change, not just seniority.
3	**Form a Vision**	A one-sentence picture of the future everyone can repeat.
4	**Enlist the Army**	Communicate widely. Empower people to carry the vision through workshops and town halls.
5	**Remove Barriers**	Remove the processes, structures, or behaviours blocking the change.
6	**Win Short-Term**	Create visible early wins and celebrate them. Credibility compounds.
7	**Sustain Momentum**	Use early wins to tackle larger challenges. Never declare victory too soon.
8	**Embed the Change**	Anchor new behaviours in culture, reviews, and onboarding. Make it the default.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We announced the strategy in an all-hands and sent the slide deck. Done."

STRONG

"We showed the competitive data, formed a coalition of 12 respected leaders, and celebrated our first milestone publicly."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping Step 1. Without genuine urgency the coalition stays polite and barriers stay in place. Urgency is not created by a presentation. It is created by making the cost of inaction viscerally real.

WORKS WELL WITH

ADKAR Kotter maps the org journey; ADKAR maps each individual's journey within it

McKinsey 7S Use 7S to identify which elements need to shift at each Kotter step

SCARF Design each step to minimise Certainty and Status SCARF threats

OUTPUT

A linear roadmap for a large-scale transformation with human and structural elements addressed at each step.

AVOID WHEN

The change is small or affects only one person. Kotter is for organisational transformation, not team process tweaks.

STAGE 5 · ACT

ADKAR Model

Individual change adoption · Prosci

Diagnostic

Quick

CONCEPT

Organisations do not change. People do. ADKAR maps the five sequential milestones every individual must pass through to genuinely adopt a change. Its power is diagnostic: if someone is stuck, ADKAR tells you exactly which milestone they have not cleared. A Knowledge gap requires training. A Desire gap requires motivation work. Misdiagnosing the gap leads to the wrong intervention.

THE FRAMEWORK

A **Awareness: do they understand why?**
Communicate the business reasons and the risks of not changing. If people do not understand the why, nothing else matters.

D **Desire: do they want to change?**
Address "What is in it for me?" Awareness does not create motivation. Desire is personal and must be earned, not assumed.

K **Knowledge: do they know how?**
Provide training, documentation, and Q and A forums. Knowledge gaps are the easiest to fix once Awareness and Desire are in place.

A **Ability: can they actually do it?**
Knowledge alone is not enough. Offer hands-on practice and coaching. Watch for people who know what to do but cannot yet execute.

R **Reinforcement: will it stick?**
Recognise success. Gather feedback. Align reward systems to new behaviours. Without reinforcement, most change reverts within 90 days.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We trained everyone on the new system but nobody is using it correctly."

STRONG

"Training covered Knowledge but Desire is the gap. They understand how but do not see the personal benefit yet."

ANTI-PATTERN

Jumping to Knowledge (training) when the real gap is Desire. This is the most common change management mistake. If people do not want to change, more training will not help. Diagnose the milestone gap first, then select the intervention.

WORKS WELL WITH

Kotter's 8 Steps Kotter is the org-level map; ADKAR is the individual-level scorecard for the same journey

SCARF SCARF explains why the Desire milestone is often the hardest to unlock

Radical Candor Use Radical Candor to have honest conversations with individuals stuck at Desire or Ability

OUTPUT

A scorecard identifying exactly which ADKAR milestone each person or group has not yet cleared.

AVOID WHEN

The change is purely technical with no human behavioural dimension, such as a background server upgrade.

STAGE 5 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You are rolling out a new operating model across three teams. The decision has been made. Now the hard work starts. Here is how Stage 5 frameworks sequence to turn a good decision into real change.

1. **Power/Interest Grid and REACH: secure the coalition first**

   Map your stakeholders. Identify the three or four people whose resistance could derail the rollout. Use REACH to build genuine alignment with each of them before any announcement. Do not skip this under time pressure.

2. **Kotter Steps 1 to 4: build the organisational momentum**

   Create urgency with real data. Build your guiding coalition from the High Power, High Interest quadrant. Form a one-sentence vision. Then communicate it relentlessly through every available channel.

3. **RACI and CLEAR: make ownership unambiguous**

   Assign every deliverable in the rollout a single Accountable owner. For each R role, use CLEAR to hand off the task properly. The most common execution failure is people assuming someone else owns a critical piece.

4. **ADKAR: track the individual journey in parallel**

   While Kotter maps the organisational steps, ADKAR tells you where individuals are getting stuck. Run ADKAR diagnostics at the two-week and four-week marks. Desire gaps need motivation work. Ability gaps need coaching. Do not confuse the two.

5. **OKRs and P.A.C.E.: maintain rhythm and visibility**

   Set OKRs for the rollout with measurable Key Results. Run weekly P.A.C.E. meetings to track progress, clear blockers, and celebrate early wins. Kotter Step 6 says generate short-term wins. OKRs and PACE meetings are how you do that systematically.

THE PRINCIPLE

Execution fails when ownership is unclear, individuals are stuck and nobody knows where, and the early wins are not being seen. These three problems have three different fixes.

EXIT CONDITION Stage 5 is complete when the new operating model runs without you actively pushing it. If it needs you to remind people every week, it has not yet been embedded. Go back to Kotter Step 8 and ADKAR Reinforcement.

6

STAGE SIX

Communicate

"How do you bring others along?"

REALITY CHECK

Give them the answer in the first sentence.

Communication runs through every stage. But there are moments when it becomes the primary challenge: when you need to give feedback that lands, present a recommendation that gets approved, or get genuinely useful output from an AI tool. The frameworks here are your language tools. They work because they respect the audience's time and intelligence.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Do you need to present a recommendation to an executive?	**Pyramid Principle**
→ Do you need to turn data into a decision?	**What-So What-Now What**
→ Do you need to give specific behavioural feedback?	**SBI-AR**
→ Do you need to have a harder, more honest conversation?	**Radical Candor**
→ Do you need better output from an AI model?	**CO-STAR Prompting**
→ Do you need to quality-check AI output before using it?	**Human-in-the-Loop**

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

Pyramid Principle

Answer-first communication · Barbara Minto, McKinsey

Communication

Quick

CONCEPT

Most people communicate by building up to their conclusion. They share the context, then the analysis, then the finding, then finally the recommendation. Executives experience this as suspense they did not ask for. The Pyramid Principle reverses the order: lead with your answer, then support it. Your audience can follow or challenge your reasoning from the first sentence.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **The Point: your single core message**
   Lead with your answer, recommendation, or conclusion. One sentence. Example: "We recommend investing 5 million to launch Product X in the European market."
2. **Key Arguments: three to five supporting reasons**
   Each argument directly supports the main point. They should be MECE. Example: "Based on three factors: large market opportunity, competitive advantage, and strong financial returns."
3. **Supporting Data: proof for each argument**
   Facts and evidence that validate each key argument. Example: "EU market size is 500 million euros, growing at 10 percent annually, with our target segment underserved."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I will walk you through the background, then the analysis, and then we will get to my recommendation at the end."

STRONG

"My recommendation is X. Here are the three reasons. Here is the data behind each one."

ANTI-PATTERN

Presenting your process rather than your conclusion. "First we did A, then B, then C, therefore D" is still building up to the answer. Start with D. Use A, B, and C only to justify it.

WORKS WELL WITH

MECE Ensure your Key Arguments have no overlaps and no gaps before presenting

What-So What-Now What Use for data-driven slides within a Pyramid-structured presentation

P.A.C.E. Meetings Every presentation in a P.A.C.E. meeting should open with the Pyramid point

OUTPUT

A message with the main conclusion stated in the first sentence, supported by logical arguments and data.

AVOID WHEN

You are building suspense, telling a story, or delivering news that requires emotional preparation first.

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

What-So What-Now What

Turning data into decisions · Communication best practice

Communication

Quick

CONCEPT

Data is useless unless it drives action. Most data presentations show a chart and explain what it shows. That is only one third of the job. What-So What-Now What forces you to move from finding to implication to recommendation. Without the So What and Now What, your data is decoration.

THE FRAMEWORK

1. **What: state the finding clearly**
   One factual sentence. Example: "Our Q2 customer churn rate increased from 3 percent to 5 percent."
2. **So What: explain why it matters**
   What does this mean for the business? Example: "This represents 200 additional lost customers and 50,000 in lost recurring revenue, signalling dissatisfaction with our recent update."
3. **Now What: propose the action**
   Specific: who does what by when. Example: "Survey churned customers this week. Dedicate two engineers to the top three issues within 30 days."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Churn went up from 3 percent to 5 percent in Q2." (What only. No implication, no action.)

STRONG

"Churn rose 2 points (What). That is 50k in lost revenue signalling a product issue (So What). Survey churned users this week (Now What)."

ANTI-PATTERN

Spending most of your presentation on the What and barely touching the So What and Now What. The data is the least valuable part of the communication. The insight and recommendation are what your audience actually needs.

WORKS WELL WITH

Pyramid Principle Use this structure for individual data slides within a Pyramid-structured presentation

OKRs Use this structure when presenting Key Result progress at quarterly reviews

Risk Assessment Matrix Present each Red risk using What-So What-Now What to drive immediate action

OUTPUT

A clear recommendation driven by a specific data finding with an explicit implication connecting the two.

AVOID WHEN

You are in an exploratory data session with no conclusions yet. This framework is for communicating findings, not discovering them.

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

SBI-AR Model

Situation, Behaviour, Impact, Action, Result · Center for Creative Leadership

Communication

Quick

CONCEPT

Most feedback fails because it is vague, judgmental, or both. "You need to communicate better" tells someone nothing actionable. SBI-AR replaces opinion with observable fact. It describes a specific situation, a specific behaviour, and a specific impact, then moves forward with an action and an expected result. It works for both positive and constructive feedback.

THE FRAMEWORK

S **Situation: where and when?**
Name the specific context. Example: "In yesterday's client update meeting..."

B **Behaviour: what did you observe?**
Observable action only. No interpretation or judgment. Example: "...you moved quickly through the data slides without pausing for questions..."

I **Impact: what happened as a result?**
The consequence on the project, team, or client. Example: "...the client seemed confused and asked several clarifying questions, which took up extra time."

A **Action: what would you suggest instead?**
A specific alternative or a question inviting their input. Example: "Could we pause after key data points to check for understanding?"

R **Result: what outcome does this change create?**
The positive outcome expected. Example: "This will build client confidence and keep everyone aligned throughout."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"You need to be more careful in client meetings."

STRONG

"In yesterday's call (S), you moved past the revenue slide quickly (B), which left the client confused (I). Pause for questions after each chart next time (A) to build trust (R)."

ANTI-PATTERN

Using SBI-AR when you are still angry. The model requires objectivity. If you cannot describe the behaviour without emotional language creeping in, wait. The goal is to improve future performance, not to express frustration.

WORKS WELL WITH

Radical Candor Use Radical Candor as the mindset check, SBI-AR as the delivery structure

GROW After SBI-AR names the behaviour and impact, use GROW to coach toward their own solution

SCARF Deliver SBI-AR privately to protect Status and maintain Relatedness

OUTPUT

A scripted feedback conversation grounded in specific observed behaviour and its measurable impact.

AVOID WHEN

You are still processing the emotion. Wait until you can describe the behaviour without judgment.

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

Radical Candor

Care personally, challenge directly · Kim Scott

Communication

Quick

CONCEPT

Most managers think they must choose between being kind and being honest. Radical Candor argues this is a false choice. The most effective feedback sits at the intersection of caring personally about the person and challenging them directly about their behaviour. Anything else either withholds what people need to grow or delivers it in a way that makes them defensive.

THE FOUR QUADRANTS

RADICAL CANDOR

High Care, High Challenge. You tell the hard truth because you genuinely want the person to succeed. Builds trust and drives results.

RUINOUS EMPATHY

High Care, Low Challenge. Too afraid to hurt feelings so you stay silent or sugarcoat. The most common management failure. You deny people feedback they need.

OBNOXIOUS AGGRESSION

Low Care, High Challenge. You challenge without showing you care. Feels like an attack. Destroys trust even when the feedback is accurate.

MANIPULATIVE INSINCERITY

Low Care, Low Challenge. False praise to avoid awkwardness. The most corrosive quadrant: erodes both trust and performance simultaneously.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Great job in that meeting!" (Said to avoid an awkward conversation about real problems.)

STRONG

"I want to see you succeed here. That is why I need to tell you directly that this approach is not working."

ANTI-PATTERN

Using Radical Candor as a licence to be blunt without warmth. The Care Personally element is not optional. If you have not established genuine care first, direct challenge lands as Obnoxious Aggression regardless of your intent.

WORKS WELL WITH

SBI-AR Radical Candor is the mindset, SBI-AR is the delivery structure

SCARF Reduce SCARF threats before challenging directly. Earn the right to the Radical Candor quadrant.

GROW After the candid feedback lands, use GROW to move from the problem to the solution

OUTPUT

A direct conversation that challenges specific behaviour while making genuine personal care visible and felt.

AVOID WHEN

You have not yet built a baseline of trust. Candor without relationship lands as aggression.

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

CO-STAR Prompting

Structured AI prompting · AI workflow best practice

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Most AI failures are prompting failures. When output is generic or off-tone, the problem is almost never the model. It is the instruction. CO-STAR is a six-part checklist that gives the model enough context to produce usable output on the first attempt, reducing the back-and-forth that wastes time.

THE FRAMEWORK

C: Context
What is the background? Example: "I am a Senior PM working on a software launch for a fintech client."

O: Objective
What exactly do you need? Example: "Draft a difficult email explaining a two-week delay to the client."

S: Style
Who should the AI write like? Example: "Write like a professional, empathetic but firm consultant."

T: Tone
What is the emotional register? Example: "Apologetic but solution-oriented. Not defensive."

A: Audience
Who is reading this? Example: "A non-technical CFO who cares about budget and timelines."

R: Response format
What format do you want? Example: "A structured email with subject line and bullet points for Next Steps."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Write me an email about the project delay."

STRONG

"Context: fintech PM. Objective: delay email. Style: consultant. Tone: apologetic but firm. Audience: non-technical CFO. Format: structured email."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating a poor AI output as an AI failure when it is a prompting failure. Before concluding the model cannot do something, apply CO-STAR fully and try again. The quality difference between a vague prompt and a CO-STAR prompt on the same task is consistently significant.

WORKS WELL WITH

AI Delegation Matrix CO-STAR is most valuable for Augment quadrant tasks where output quality matters

Human-in-the-Loop A strong CO-STAR prompt feeds directly into the Generate step of the HITL process

Pyramid Principle Specify Pyramid structure in the Response format element to get answer-first AI output

OUTPUT

A structured prompt ready to paste into any AI model that produces usable output on the first attempt.

AVOID WHEN

You need a quick factual answer. CO-STAR is for complex, tone-sensitive, or high-stakes AI tasks, not simple lookups.

STAGE 6 · COMMUNICATE

Human-in-the-Loop

AI quality control · AI workflow best practice

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

AI is a powerful engine for speed but human judgment is the steering wheel for quality. The Human-in-the-Loop model ensures you use AI to accelerate your work without removing your thinking from the process. The four-step loop prevents hallucinations, generic output, and the gradual erosion of judgment that comes from over-relying on AI.

THE FOUR-STEP LOOP

1. **Direct: you define the goal**
   Set the specific objective, context, and constraints using CO-STAR. The quality of your direction determines the quality of everything that follows.
2. **Generate: AI does the heavy lifting**
   The AI drafts, summarises, or codes. This is the speed step. Treat the output as raw material, not finished work.
3. **Audit: you check for accuracy and authenticity**
   Are the facts correct? Is the tone authentic? Does it miss a nuance only you would know? Treat AI like a smart junior who works fast but needs reviewing. Never copy-paste without reading.
4. **Refine: you and AI polish together**
   Edit the output or prompt AI to fix specific sections. Add your unique insight and voice. The final product should reflect your judgment, not just the model's first attempt.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"AI wrote the report. I just cleaned it up a bit." (No real audit. Your judgment is absent.)

STRONG

"AI drafted it in three minutes. I spent fifteen verifying facts and rewriting the conclusion in my own voice."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping the Audit step under time pressure. This is when AI errors cause the most damage. A hallucinated statistic in a client document or an off-tone paragraph in a sensitive email takes far longer to fix than the audit would have taken.

WORKS WELL WITH

CO-STAR CO-STAR structures the Direct step; HITL ensures the Generate step produces something worth auditing

AI Delegation Matrix Every Augment quadrant task should follow the full HITL four-step loop without exception

Pyramid Principle Use Pyramid structure in the Refine step to ensure AI-generated documents lead with the answer

OUTPUT

A verified, polished piece of work that blends AI speed with human accuracy, judgment, and voice.

AVOID WHEN

The task is low-risk and low-stakes. For Automate quadrant tasks, a quick scan is enough. Full HITL is for work that matters.

STAGE 6 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You need to present a strategic recommendation to the leadership team, give a team member difficult feedback, and draft a client communication. All in one week. Here is how the Stage 6 frameworks sequence across those three tasks.

1. **Pyramid Principle: structure the leadership presentation**

   Lead with the recommendation on slide one. Supporting arguments on slides two to four. Data in the appendix. Your leadership team has fifteen minutes. Give them the answer first and the proof second.

2. **What-So What-Now What: make every data point actionable**

   For every chart in your slides, apply What-So What-Now What. Never show a number without explaining what it means and what it requires. Executives do not need more data. They need decisions.

3. **Radical Candor then SBI-AR: deliver the difficult feedback**

   Check which Radical Candor quadrant you are in before the conversation. If you are in Ruinous Empathy, commit to moving. Then use SBI-AR: specific situation, observable behaviour, measurable impact, concrete action, expected result.

4. **CO-STAR then Human-in-the-Loop: draft and verify the client communication**

   Write a full CO-STAR prompt for the client email. Let AI generate the first draft. Then audit carefully: are the facts right, is the tone appropriate for this specific client, does it reflect your judgment? Refine until it does.

THE PRINCIPLE

Every communication has an audience with limited time and specific needs. The frameworks in this stage exist to make sure your message reaches them in a form they can actually use.

EXIT CONDITION Stage 6 is complete when your audience has received the message in a form they can act on. Not when you have sent it. Receipt and comprehension are different things. If action does not follow, the communication has not yet worked.

7

STAGE SEVEN

Sustain

"How do you make it stick?"

REALITY CHECK

Most initiatives fail not at launch but three months later, when urgency fades and old habits return.

Sustaining change, whether in yourself, your team, or your organisation, is a distinct skill that requires distinct tools. Willpower is not a system. The frameworks here are about building systems that outlast willpower, developing people over time, and maintaining the quality of your AI-assisted work so it does not quietly degrade.

CHAPTER DIAGNOSTIC: REACH FOR THE RIGHT TOOL FIRST

→ Do you need to build a new personal habit?	**Atomic Habits**
→ Do you need to achieve a goal despite internal resistance?	**WOOP Framework**
→ Do you need to manage a chaotic workload sustainably?	**GTD**
→ Do you need to develop someone's capability over time?	**GROW Model**
→ Do you need to hire for sustained future performance?	**STAR Method**
→ Do you need to maintain quality in ongoing AI-assisted work?	**Human-in-the-Loop**

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

Atomic Habits

Cue, Craving, Response, Reward · James Clear

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

Habits are not built through motivation. They are built through systems. Every habit runs on a four-step neurological loop. By deliberately designing each step, you can make good behaviours almost automatic and bad ones almost impossible. Small changes compound. A 1 percent improvement each day produces a 37-times improvement over a year.

THE FRAMEWORK

Cue: make it obvious
The trigger that initiates the habit. To build good habits: make cues visible. Place your running shoes by the door. Set a calendar block with a specific location. To break bad habits: make cues invisible.

Craving: make it attractive
The desire for the reward. To build: pair a needed habit with a wanted one (temptation bundling). Listen to your favourite podcast only while exercising. To break: make the craving unattractive.

Response: make it easy
The actual behaviour. To build: reduce friction. Apply the Two-Minute Rule: commit to just starting for two minutes. Lay out materials the night before. To break: make the response difficult.

Reward: make it satisfying
The outcome that reinforces the loop. To build: track your streak visually, give small immediate rewards after completing a block. To break: make the reward unsatisfying.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK
"I need to be more disciplined about reading every morning." (Relies on willpower, not design.)

STRONG
"Book is on my pillow (Cue). Coffee only after one chapter (Reward). Friction to skip is higher than friction to start."

ANTI-PATTERN

Trying to build too many habits simultaneously. Each new habit requires cognitive bandwidth to establish. Pick one, make it automatic, then add the next. Stacking three new habits at once is how all three fail.

WORKS WELL WITH

WOOP WOOP identifies the internal obstacle; Atomic Habits designs the system to overcome it

GTD GTD captures and organises commitments; Atomic Habits makes the execution of those commitments automatic

Eisenhower Use Atomic Habits to build the Q2 habits that prevent Q1 crises from recurring

OUTPUT
A designed environment with a clear Cue and Reward that makes the desired behaviour the path of least resistance.

AVOID WHEN
You need a one-time burst of effort. Habits are for behaviours you want to repeat indefinitely, not single events.

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

WOOP Framework

Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan · Gabriele Oettingen

Checklist

Quick

CONCEPT

Pure positive thinking about goals actually reduces the likelihood of achieving them. It satisfies the desire to succeed without creating the plan to do so. WOOP combines positive visualisation with a realistic confrontation of the internal obstacle standing in your way. The if-then plan it produces is far more effective than motivation alone.

THE FRAMEWORK

W **Wish: what do you want to achieve?**
A challenging but attainable goal. Specific and positive. Example: "Complete the Azure Data Factory module this week."

O **Outcome: how will you feel when you achieve it?**
Vividly imagine the best possible result. The direct benefits and the feeling of accomplishment. This creates genuine motivation.

O **Obstacle: what internal barrier will get in your way?**
Not an external challenge. Something within yourself: a bad habit, a limiting belief, an emotion. Example: "I feel tired after work and procrastinate by scrolling social media."

P **Plan: if the obstacle occurs, then what?**
A concrete if-then action. Example: "If I feel tired and reach for my phone (Obstacle), then I will immediately go to my desk and open the module for just 10 minutes (Action)."

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I am going to study every evening this week. I am really motivated."

STRONG

"If I feel tired at 7pm (Obstacle), then I will sit at my desk and open the module for 10 minutes before deciding whether to continue (Plan)."

ANTI-PATTERN

Identifying an external obstacle rather than an internal one. "My schedule is too busy" is not a WOOP obstacle. The real obstacle is the belief that the schedule cannot be changed, or the habit of saying yes to things that crowd out the goal. Go inward.

WORKS WELL WITH

Atomic Habits WOOP identifies the obstacle; Atomic Habits redesigns the environment to make it easier to overcome

GTD WOOP creates the commitment; GTD captures the next action that delivers on it

OKRs Apply WOOP to each Key Result to anticipate the personal obstacles that will slow progress

OUTPUT

A written if-then plan that names the specific internal obstacle and the specific action to take when it appears.

AVOID WHEN

You are planning external project logistics. WOOP is for personal behavioural change, not project management.

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

Getting Things Done

Capture, Clarify, Organise, Reflect, Engage · David Allen

Checklist

Deep

CONCEPT

Your brain is for having ideas, not holding them. Every task kept in your head consumes bandwidth that should go to actual thinking. GTD gets everything out of your head and into a trusted external system.

THE FIVE STEPS

1. **Capture: collect everything**
   Every task, idea, and commitment goes into an inbox. Notebooks, apps, voice memos. Nothing stays in your head.
2. **Clarify: process each item**
   Actionable? If no: trash, file, or defer to Someday/Maybe. If yes and under two minutes: do it now. If yes and over two minutes: delegate or defer to Next Actions.
3. **Organise: put things in the right place**
   Next Actions by context (@calls, @computer). Projects list for multi-step items. Waiting For for delegated items. Someday/Maybe for future ideas.
4. **Reflect: the weekly review**
   Once a week: clear all inboxes, review all lists, update projects, get clear for the week ahead. The weekly review is the cornerstone of the system.
5. **Engage: choose what to do now**
   Based on context, time, energy, and priority. Trust your system enough to act without anxiety.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"I keep forgetting things and feel like I am always behind."

STRONG

"Everything is captured. My weekly review takes 45 minutes. I start each day knowing exactly what matters."

ANTI-PATTERN

Skipping the weekly review. GTD without the weekly review is just a stale to-do list. The review is the moment you reconnect with reality. Without it, the system degrades within two weeks.

WORKS WELL WITH

Eisenhower Use Eisenhower during the Engage step to decide which captured next action deserves your attention now

Atomic Habits Make the daily capture and weekly review automatic habits using the Atomic Habits loop

OKRs Your Projects list should map directly to your active OKR Key Results

OUTPUT

A clear mind and organised lists (Next Actions, Projects, Waiting For) that you trust enough to act from without anxiety.

AVOID WHEN

You are in a chaotic environment requiring immediate reaction. Capture after the crisis, not during it.

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

GROW Model

Goal, Reality, Options, Will · Sir John Whitmore

Generative

Deep

CONCEPT

The fastest way to develop someone is not to give them the answer. It is to ask the questions that help them find it themselves. Solutions people arrive at on their own are adopted with far more commitment than solutions handed to them. GROW is a coaching framework structured around four stages of guided questioning. The manager asks. The person discovers. The commitment belongs to them.

THE FRAMEWORK

G **Goal: what do you want to achieve?**
Define a specific, inspiring target for the conversation and the longer term. Example: "What outcome are you looking for from today's conversation?" or "What does success look like for this project?"

R **Reality: where are you now?**
Explore the current situation honestly. Facts, challenges, past efforts. No judgment. Example: "Where are you now in relation to this goal?" or "What has worked or not worked so far?"

O **Options: what could you do?**
Brainstorm all possible paths forward. Encourage creativity. Resist the urge to suggest solutions. Example: "What could you do?" or "If there were no constraints, what would you try?"

W **Will: what will you actually do?**
Secure a commitment to specific, actionable steps with timelines. Example: "Which option will you choose?" or "What is your very first step, and by when?"

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"Here is what I think you should do about this situation."

STRONG

"What do you think your options are here? Which one feels most right to you? When will you do it?"

ANTI-PATTERN

Rushing to the Will stage before Options has been properly explored. If the person commits to the first option they thought of without examining alternatives, the commitment is fragile. Spend more time in Options than feels comfortable.

WORKS WELL WITH

Situational Leadership Use GROW for D3 and D4 individuals who have the capability but need coaching, not directing

Radical Candor Radical Candor opens the door; GROW is the conversation that follows once the issue is named

SBI-AR SBI-AR names the behaviour and impact; GROW helps the person find their own path forward

OUTPUT

A single committed action step with a deadline that the person generated themselves and owns fully.

AVOID WHEN

The situation is a crisis requiring immediate directive instruction. Coach after the emergency, not during it.

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

STAR Method

Checklist

Quick

Situation, Task, Action, Result · Behavioural interviewing foundation

CONCEPT

The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. STAR is a structured behavioural interviewing framework that elicits specific examples of how a candidate has acted in real situations. Generic interview answers tell you what someone believes they would do. STAR answers tell you what they actually did. That distinction matters enormously when making a hire that needs to sustain performance over time.

THE FRAMEWORK

S **Situation: what was the context?**
Ask the candidate to describe a specific event or situation. Example question: "Tell me about a time you had to work with a difficult stakeholder."

T **Task: what was their responsibility?**
What goal were they working toward? What was their specific role? Push for clarity on their individual contribution versus the team's.

A **Action: what did they specifically do?**
The most important part. Dig into the individual's actions. "What did you personally do?" not "What did the team do?" Listen for initiative, judgment, and self-awareness.

R **Result: what was the outcome?**
What happened? What did they learn? Quantify where possible. A strong candidate connects their specific action to a measurable result.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We as a team managed to turn the client around. It was a great effort."

STRONG

"I personally scheduled a one-on-one, listened to their core concern, revised one key slide, and the launch was approved. NPS went up 12 points."

ANTI-PATTERN

Accepting "we" answers without probing for the individual's specific contribution. Candidates often default to team language when their own role was limited. Always follow up with "What specifically did you do?" before moving on.

WORKS WELL WITH

Situational Leadership Use STAR evidence to assess a candidate's likely readiness level (D1 to D4) for the role

GROW Apply GROW in the onboarding phase once the STAR-based hire is made

Radical Candor Establish the feedback culture from day one that STAR helped you select people for

OUTPUT

A scored evaluation of a candidate based on specific past behaviour, not stated intention or generic ability claims.

AVOID WHEN

You need to assess technical skills or future potential. Use a case study or technical test for those dimensions.

STAGE 7 · SUSTAIN

Human-in-the-Loop

Checklist

Quick

AI quality control · Also in Stage 6 · Communicate

WHY IT APPEARS HERE TOO

HITL was introduced in Stage 6 as a communication quality tool. It reappears here because sustaining quality in ongoing AI-assisted work requires it to become a discipline, not just a one-time practice. As AI becomes embedded in daily workflows, the Audit step is the first thing people skip under time pressure. That is exactly when errors compound.

THE SUSTAIN APPLICATION

Build the habit

Use Atomic Habits to make the Audit step automatic. Place a physical or digital friction point before copy-pasting any AI output. The habit is: generate, then always read before you send.

Set a review cadence

Monthly, review which tasks you have put in the Automate quadrant. Have any drifted into Augment without you noticing? Reset the boundaries deliberately, not reactively.

Protect your voice

Over time, unchecked AI output homogenises your communication style. The Refine step is where you add your distinctive perspective. Protect it actively or it erodes gradually.

Keep the judgment sharp

Regularly write, decide, and communicate without AI assistance. If you cannot produce quality output independently, your ability to audit AI output will degrade too.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK

"We use AI for everything now. It has saved us so much time this quarter."

STRONG

"We audit everything before it leaves the team. We also write one major document per month without AI to keep our judgment calibrated."

ANTI-PATTERN

Treating HITL as a one-time setup rather than an ongoing discipline. The danger of AI in workflows is not the dramatic failure. It is the gradual drift toward lower quality that nobody notices because each individual output is just slightly worse than the last.

WORKS WELL WITH

Atomic Habits Design a Cue-Response-Reward loop that makes the Audit step automatic rather than optional

AI Delegation Matrix Review your task classifications monthly to prevent Augment tasks from drifting into Automate

GTD Add a monthly HITL calibration review to your GTD weekly review as a standing agenda item

OUTPUT

An ongoing AI workflow where the Audit step is habitual, task classifications are reviewed regularly, and your independent judgment stays sharp.

AVOID WHEN

The task is clearly in the Automate quadrant with genuinely low cost of error. Not everything needs deep review.

STAGE 7 · END OF CHAPTER

How these work together

You have just finished a demanding quarter. The project launched, the team performed, and the feedback was positive. Now the real challenge: how do you make the good things stick and prevent the organisation from quietly reverting to old patterns?

Here is how Stage 7 frameworks sequence for someone trying to sustain both personal effectiveness and team development simultaneously.

1. **GTD: clear the backlog and reset**

   After a demanding period, your inbox, task list, and mental state all need a reset. Run a full GTD capture and weekly review. Get everything out of your head and into the system before making any new commitments. Starting the next phase with a cluttered system compounds the pressure.

2. **WOOP: identify the internal obstacles to sustaining what worked**

   Pick one behaviour or practice from the quarter that you want to keep. Apply WOOP to it. What is the internal obstacle that will cause you to slide back? Name it specifically. Build the if-then plan before the obstacle appears, not after.

3. **Atomic Habits: design the system for the behaviours that matter**

   For each practice you want to sustain, design the four-step loop deliberately. What is the Cue? What makes it easy to start? What is the immediate reward? Willpower will not carry you through a busy quarter. The system will.

4. **GROW: develop the people who made the quarter work**

   Identify the one or two team members who grew the most. Schedule a GROW conversation with each. Not a performance review. A coaching session focused on their next step, their options, and their commitment. Development is what keeps strong people engaged and retained.

5. **Human-in-the-Loop: audit your AI workflow before it drifts**

   Review every task you classified as Automate or Augment this quarter. Has any drifted into lower quality without you noticing? Reset the Audit habit before the next cycle begins. Quality in AI-assisted work degrades gradually and silently if nobody is watching.

THE PRINCIPLE

Sustaining is not the same as maintaining. Maintenance is passive. Sustaining is an active choice to design systems, develop people, and audit quality before problems compound.

EXIT CONDITION Stage 7 is never truly complete. It is a cadence. You are doing it right when you have a weekly review that clears your system, a coaching conversation scheduled with each direct report, and an AI workflow that you audit deliberately rather than trust blindly.

BACK MATTER

The Hard Calls

Practice

Twelve dilemmas. No recommended answers. Your judgment only.

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

Each scenario ends with the line that names what makes it genuinely hard. No frameworks listed, no answers given. Read it, sit with it, decide what you would do first. The discomfort is the point.

1

Your best performer is also your most disruptive team member. Three colleagues have privately said she is exhausting. She does not know. Your instinct is Radical Candor but her SCARF profile suggests direct challenge will shut her down. You have one conversation. **What do you do first?**

2

You believe the right answer is Option A. The CEO clearly wants Option B. Your analysis is solid. His preference is based on intuition and a relationship you are not party to. You present in 48 hours. **What do you present?**

3

Your team velocity is high and morale is good. But the product no longer matches what the market needs. Cynefin says Complex: run experiments. Your OKRs say you have eight weeks to hit a number. **Which takes precedence?**

4

A junior team member made a significant error in a client document. Caught before damage. It happened because you delegated without CLEAR and she lacked context. The client is asking who was responsible. **What do you say and to whom?**

5

Your BATNA is weak in a vendor negotiation. No realistic alternative at this price. The vendor probably suspects your position. You have been advised to appear confident. **How do you negotiate honestly without exposing your vulnerability?**

6

A senior leader asked you to SWOT their personally championed initiative. You ran it. The Threats and Weaknesses are damning. The initiative should not proceed as designed. They have already announced it internally. **How do you present what you found?**

BACK MATTER

The Hard Calls (continued)

Practice

Scenarios 7 to 12

7

Three steps into Kotter's model. Urgency is real, coalition strong, vision clear. Then a senior coalition member leaves. His successor is skeptical and has the ear of the CEO. You have not yet removed barriers or generated wins. **Do you continue or rebuild?**

8

A key team member is stuck at Desire. She understands the change and knows how to do it. She simply does not want to. You have tried WIIFM twice. Nothing has shifted. The change is mandatory. **What do you do next?**

9

You are using AI to draft a client strategy document. The output is excellent but two statistics may not be accurate. Verifying them would take three hours you do not have. The document is due tomorrow. **What do you send?**

10

Your diagnosis says a team member is D4 on this task. You delegate fully with S4. Two weeks later the deliverable is poor quality. He says he needed more guidance but did not ask for it. **Whose responsibility is this and what changes next time?**

11

RICE puts a bug fix at the top of the backlog. Your engineering lead says the underlying technical debt is the real problem and fixing the surface will create three more bugs within 60 days. RICE does not capture this. **Do you follow the score or override it?**

12

Design Thinking empathy with 12 users. Eight describe a pain point your product solves well. Four describe a completely different job your product ignores. Your roadmap is built around the eight. **What do you do with the four?**

BACK MATTER

Known Tensions

Reference

Framework pairs that conflict when applied to the same situation

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

Some frameworks pull in opposite directions when applied to the same situation. This is not a flaw in the frameworks. It is a signal that the situation contains a genuine trade-off. When you feel two frameworks conflicting, use the navigation guidance below rather than defaulting to whichever feels more familiar.

THE SEVEN TENSIONS

TENSION	WHEN IT APPEARS	HOW TO NAVIGATE
Cynefin Complex vs Kotter's Vision	Leading change in a genuinely uncertain market or environment	Run experiments first. Crystallise the vision only once patterns have emerged. A vision imposed on a Complex situation becomes dogma.
BATNA vs Long-term Relationship	Negotiating with a partner you need to work with for years after this deal	Strengthen BATNA privately but negotiate as if the relationship is the primary asset.
Radical Candor vs SCARF	Giving critical feedback when trust is low or the relationship is new	Address the SCARF threat first. Earn the right to challenge directly. Candor without relationship lands as aggression regardless of intent.
OKRs vs Agile	Quarterly goals set in a market that changes faster than the quarter	Set directional OKRs that define the destination. Let Agile determine the path. Renegotiate a Key Result that becomes obviously wrong rather than hitting a number that no longer matters.
First Principles vs Design Thinking	Innovation projects where both user empathy and assumption-busting are needed	Use Design Thinking to find the right problem. Use First Principles to build the solution unconstrained by convention.
Kotter vs ADKAR	Large-scale change where organisational steps and individual adoption are both lagging	They operate at different levels. Kotter maps the organisational journey. ADKAR maps each individual within it. Use both simultaneously.
Six Thinking Hats vs MECE	Group sessions where you need both broad idea generation and structured analysis	Run Six Hats to generate widely. Apply MECE afterward to structure what emerged. Applying MECE during Green Hat kills ideas before they form.

BACK MATTER

Prompt Library

41 prompts · One per framework · Organised by stage

AI Tools

HOW TO USE

Each prompt maps to a specific framework and situation. Fill in the bracketed placeholders. Every prompt is written to produce useful output on the first attempt. Each entry includes a note on what to do with the output once you have it.

STAGE 1: NAME THE PROBLEM

CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

"Situation: [describe in 2-3 sentences]. Categorise it using Cynefin (Clear, Complicated, Complex, or Chaotic). For each domain explain briefly why it fits or does not. Recommend the most appropriate domain and the decision-making approach it implies."

With the output: use the recommended domain to choose your next framework.

PESTLE ANALYSIS

"I am [role] at [organisation] planning [initiative]. Run a PESTLE analysis. For each factor identify the two most significant forces. Highlight the three most likely to affect my strategy in the next 12 to 24 months and explain why."

With the output: take the top three forces into your SWOT Opportunities and Threats quadrants.

PORTER'S FIVE FORCES

"Analyse [industry] using Porter's Five Forces. For each force rate the threat Low, Medium, or High and give the two main drivers. Conclude with an overall attractiveness assessment. My organisation: [brief description]."

With the output: the highest-rated force is your primary strategic vulnerability.

SWOT ANALYSIS

"SWOT for [organisation or project]. Internal context: [Strengths and Weaknesses]. External context: [Opportunities and Threats]. After the four quadrants, generate one SO move, one ST move, and one WO move. Format as a table."

With the output: pick the option that best matches your resource reality and test it first.

STAGE 1: NAME THE PROBLEM (CONTINUED)

JOBS-TO-BE-DONE

"Apply JTBD to [product or service]. Based on [customer context], identify the functional job, emotional job, and social job. Then identify the key struggle: where are customers failing to get this job done with existing solutions?"

With the output: the struggle is your innovation opportunity.

STAGE 2: UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY

SCARF MODEL

"I am [role] and [name] has been resistant since [event]. Observed behaviour: [describe]. Using SCARF, diagnose which domain is most likely threatened. Suggest one action to reduce that threat and one reward signal to activate."

With the output: address the primary threat before any other conversation.

THOMAS-KILMANN / TKI

"Describe the five TKI conflict styles and their use cases. Then assess this situation: [describe the conflict]. Which style is each party likely using and why? Which style would produce the best outcome, and what would that conversation look like?"

With the output: use the recommended style consciously, not by default.

GRPI MODEL

"My team is experiencing [describe issue]. Use GRPI to diagnose which layer is broken. Score each layer 1-5 based on: [list symptoms]. Identify the primary broken layer and suggest two specific interventions for this week."

With the output: fix the highest broken layer first.

STAGE 2: UNDERSTAND IT DEEPLY (CONTINUED)

MCKINSEY 7S

"My organisation is implementing [change] but it is not landing. Using 7S, analyse: [describe current state of each element briefly]. Identify the two or three most misaligned elements and suggest one concrete adjustment for each."

With the output: the misaligned elements are your implementation priorities.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

"Run a 5 Whys on this problem: [describe clearly]. Context: [provide relevant detail]. For each Why provide the most likely factual answer. Stop at the systemic root cause. Suggest a corrective action that addresses it, not the symptom."

With the output: validate the root cause with someone who has direct knowledge before acting.

TRIPLE CONSTRAINT

"My project: Scope [describe], Time [deadline], Cost [budget]. A stakeholder has requested [change]. Using the Triple Constraint, analyse the impact on each constraint and quality. Present three trade-off options formatted for a stakeholder conversation."

With the output: present all three options and let the stakeholder choose.

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

"Assess [person] on the task of [specific task] using Situational Leadership. Their competence: [describe]. Their commitment: [describe]. Recommend the appropriate style (S1-S4) and give three specific behaviours for my next interaction."

With the output: remember this is task-specific, not person-level.

STAGE 3: GENERATE OPTIONS

SIX THINKING HATS

"Facilitate a Six Thinking Hats analysis of: [decision or proposal]. Work through each hat in order: White (facts and gaps), Yellow (benefits), Black (risks), Green (alternatives), Red (gut reactions), Blue (summary and next step). Be thorough on each before moving."

With the output: take at least one Green Hat idea seriously before discarding it.

BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY

"Apply the Four Actions Framework to [product or business]. Industry norms: [describe]. For each action (Eliminate, Reduce, Raise, Create) identify specific factors. Describe the value curve this creates and how it differs from competitors."

With the output: test the Create factors with real customers before investing in them.

FIRST PRINCIPLES THINKING

"Apply First Principles to [problem]. First, identify the conventional assumptions behind current solutions. Challenge each: is this a real constraint or inherited? Then rebuild a solution from fundamental truths only, ignoring existing approaches."

With the output: the rebuilt solution will feel radical. That is correct.

DESIGN THINKING

"Apply Design Thinking to [challenge]. Empathise: from [observations], what are the key user pain points? Define: write a point-of-view statement. Ideate: generate 10 solutions without judgment. Prototype: which two could be tested cheapest? Test: what would you observe to know if each is working?"

With the output: build the cheapest prototype of the top idea before next week.

STAGE 3: GENERATE OPTIONS (CONTINUED)

THREE HORIZONS

"Categorise our initiatives using Three Horizons. H1 (0-3 years): [list]. H2 (2-5 years): [list]. H3 (5+ years): [list]. For each horizon assess whether our resource allocation is appropriate and identify any bets that deserve more investment or should be stopped."

With the output: if you have no H3 bets, you are running a maintenance strategy.

BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

"Complete and stress-test a BMC for [business or project]. Current state: [describe each block]. For each block identify the key assumption. Then run a what-if: what happens to the canvas if [specific change]? Which blocks must change and how?"

With the output: identify the two most uncertain assumptions and design a test for each.

BATNA

"Help me prepare for a negotiation using BATNA. Situation: [describe]. Generate at least five alternatives if this negotiation fails. Evaluate each on feasibility, cost, and outcome. Identify my BATNA, my reservation point, and estimate my counterpart's BATNA based on [available information]."

With the output: your BATNA is private. Use it to know your floor, not signal your limits.

STAGE 4: DECIDE

MECE FRAMEWORK

"Review this breakdown: [list your categories]. Test for MECE compliance. For Mutually Exclusive: find any categories where an item fits more than one bucket. For Collectively Exhaustive: find any item type that fits no category. Suggest a revised MECE structure."

With the output: use the revised structure as your analysis frame before running RICE.

STAGE 4: DECIDE (CONTINUED)

RICE MODEL

"Score these items using RICE: [list]. For each suggest Reach (people per quarter), Impact (3/2/1/0.5/0.25), Confidence (%), and Effort (person-weeks). Calculate and rank. Flag any where the scores feel counterintuitive and explain why."

With the output: share the ranked list with your team before sprint planning.

EISENHOWER MATRIX

"Sort these tasks into the Eisenhower Matrix: [list]. For each assign Q1 Do, Q2 Schedule, Q3 Delegate, or Q4 Delete with brief reasoning. Then identify my top three Q2 priorities I am likely neglecting in favour of Q1 firefighting."

With the output: block time for your top three Q2 items before the week fills up.

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

"Build a Risk Assessment Matrix for [project]. Risks: [list]. For each rate Likelihood (1-5) and Impact (1-5), assign Red/Orange/Green, and recommend Avoid/Mitigate/Transfer/Accept. Format as a table and highlight the top three requiring immediate action."

With the output: assign a named owner to each Red risk before the next team meeting.

AI DELEGATION MATRIX

"Map these tasks to the AI Delegation Matrix: [list]. For each assess AI capability (High/Low) and cost of error (High/Low). Assign Automate, Augment, Experiment, or Own. Flag any I might be tempted to automate that should remain in Own or Augment."

With the output: save the mapping and review it monthly.

STAGE 5: ACT

OKRS

"Help me write OKRs for next quarter. Context: [describe]. Strategic priorities: [list]. Draft one to three Objectives that are ambitious and inspiring. For each write three to five quantitative, time-bound Key Results. Flag any that are outputs rather than outcomes and rewrite them."

With the output: score them as a team at quarter end. A 0.7 average is success.

RACI MATRIX

"Build a RACI matrix for [project]. Deliverables: [list]. Team: [list]. Assign R, A (one only), C, or I to each person per deliverable. Flag any deliverables with multiple Accountables or no clear owner. Format as a table."

With the output: walk through it with the full team before work begins.

CLEAR FRAMEWORK

"Write a CLEAR delegation brief for: [task]. Cover Context (why it matters), Level of Authority (what they decide alone), Expectations (what done looks like and deadline), Available Resources (tools and people), Review (check-in schedule). Write it as a 5-minute conversation."

With the output: use it as a script, then adapt based on their questions.

P.A.C.E. MEETINGS

"Design a P.A.C.E. agenda for a meeting about [topic]. Duration: [X minutes]. Define Purpose (one sentence), Agenda (timed items with owners), Conduct (required attendees and decision-maker), and End-result (specific decisions and actions with owners and deadlines)."

With the output: send to attendees 24 hours before.

STAGE 5: ACT (CONTINUED)

AGILE / SCRUM / KANBAN

"Design an Agile model for my team. Context: [team size, type of work, cadence]. Recommend Scrum or Kanban and why, sprint length if Scrum, ceremonies and frequency, WIP limit if Kanban, and the three anti-patterns we are most likely to fall into."

With the output: start with fewer ceremonies than recommended and add when you feel their absence.

REACH FRAMEWORK

"Plan a REACH conversation with [name] to get buy-in for [initiative]. Their priorities: [describe]. Draft a conversation covering R (connection), E (questions to understand their world), A (linking my ask to their goals), C (presenting my case clearly), H (what I can offer in return)."

With the output: memorise the intent, not the words. Authentic REACH cannot sound rehearsed.

POWER/INTEREST GRID

"Map these stakeholders for [project] using the Power/Interest Grid: [list with brief description]. Assign each to a quadrant. For each in Manage Closely suggest a specific engagement approach. Flag any whose position might shift as the project progresses."

With the output: revisit after every major milestone.

KOTTER'S 8-STEP MODEL

"Plan a change initiative using Kotter's 8 Steps. The change: [describe]. For each step suggest the specific action in my context, who to involve, and what success looks like before moving on. Identify the two steps where this change is most likely to stall."

With the output: the two high-risk steps are your early warning system.

STAGE 5: ACT (CONTINUED)

ADKAR MODEL

"Run an ADKAR diagnostic for [person or group] regarding [change]. Based on: [describe behaviour and what they have said], assess which milestone they are stuck at. Suggest two targeted interventions for that specific milestone gap, not generic change management advice."

With the output: a Desire gap needs motivation work. A Knowledge gap needs training. Never confuse them.

STAGE 6: COMMUNICATE

PYRAMID PRINCIPLE

"Restructure this communication using the Pyramid Principle: [paste your draft]. Identify the single core message and move it to the first sentence. Organise supporting content into three to five MECE key arguments. Place supporting data under each. Output the restructured answer-first version."

With the output: if the first sentence does not stand alone as a recommendation, rewrite it.

WHAT-SO WHAT-NOW WHAT

"Help me present this finding using What-So What-Now What. The finding: [data point]. Write the So What (why it matters and what insight we can draw) and the Now What (a specific recommendation with a named owner and deadline). Three sentences or fewer per section."

With the output: the Now What must be specific enough to act on without asking a follow-up.

SBI-AR MODEL

"Write an SBI-AR feedback script. Situation: [where and when]. Behaviour: [exactly what I observed, no interpretation]. Impact: [the consequence]. Draft the Action (specific alternative or question) and Result (positive outcome expected). Write it as something I can say in under two minutes."

With the output: deliver within 48 hours of the event.

STAGE 6: COMMUNICATE (CONTINUED)

RADICAL CANDOR

"Help me prepare a Radical Candor conversation with [name]. The behaviour: [describe]. Assess which quadrant I am in. Draft an opening line that demonstrates genuine care before the challenge. Help me anticipate their likely defensive response and prepare a calm follow-up."

With the output: if the opening could come from anyone, rewrite it to be specific to your care for this person.

CO-STAR PROMPTING

"Build a CO-STAR prompt for: [describe the AI task]. Draft each element: Context (my role), Objective (what I need), Style (who to write like), Tone (emotional register), Audience (who reads this), Response format (structure and length). Combine into a ready-to-use prompt."

With the output: save your standard Context and Style as a snippet. Reuse across similar tasks.

HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP

"Act as my audit partner for this AI output: [paste content]. Check for: factual accuracy issues, tone authenticity, missing nuance only a human would know, and structural issues. Suggest specific edits for each problem found."

With the output: do not just accept the edits. Each change must reflect your judgment.

STAGE 7: SUSTAIN

ATOMIC HABITS

"Design an Atomic Habits loop for: [habit]. For each step: Cue (what trigger makes this obvious?), Craving (how to make it attractive?), Response (how to reduce friction?), Reward (what immediate satisfaction reinforces the loop?). Identify the most likely reason this fails and design a countermeasure."

With the output: implement only the Cue change this week.

STAGE 7: SUSTAIN (CONTINUED)

WOOP FRAMEWORK

"Guide me through WOOP for this goal: [describe]. Help me define the Wish (specific and attainable), vividly describe the best Outcome (how I will feel), identify the internal Obstacle (not external something within me), and write a concrete if-then Plan. Make the plan as immediate as possible."

With the output: write the if-then plan somewhere visible when the obstacle appears.

GTD

"Help me run a GTD weekly review. My inbox: [paste items]. For each: is it actionable? If yes, what is the next action? Flag items under two minutes. If to be delegated, say to whom. Assign each to Next Actions, Projects, Waiting For, or Someday/Maybe. Output as a processed list."

With the output: do the two-minute items immediately before organising anything else.

GROW MODEL

"Prepare me for a GROW coaching conversation with [name]. Their challenge: [describe]. Draft five questions for each stage: Goal (what do they want?), Reality (where are they now?), Options (what could they do?), Will (what will they commit to?). Prioritise open questions over closed ones."

With the output: use the questions as a guide, not a script. Follow their answers.

STAR METHOD

"Design a STAR interview guide for [job title]. Core competencies: [list 4-5]. For each write one behavioural question and three follow-up probes that dig into the individual's specific action. Write indicators of a strong vs weak STAR response for each competency."

With the output: score each candidate on the same rubric immediately after the interview.

STAGE 7: SUSTAIN (CONTINUED)

HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP (SUSTAIN)

"Design an ongoing HITL quality discipline for my team's AI workflows. Current usage: [describe]. For each workflow define: the Audit checklist, frequency of deeper reviews, the trigger for reclassifying from Automate to Augment, and a monthly calibration exercise to keep independent judgment sharp."

With the output: implement the audit checklist as a shared team standard, not an individual practice.

BACK MATTER

Your Framework Card

Template

Adapt an existing framework or document one you have discovered

HOW TO USE

Document any framework you have adapted or discovered. If you cannot fill in the Output and Avoid When fields, the framework is not yet clear enough to use under pressure.

FRAMEWORK NAME

STAGE AND COGNITIVE TYPE

CONCEPT

THE FRAMEWORK

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

WEAK	STRONG

ANTI-PATTERN

WORKS WELL WITH

OUTPUT

AVOID WHEN

BACK MATTER

Glossary

Reference

Key terms used throughout this book

TERM	DEFINITION
ADKAR	Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement. The five sequential milestones individuals must pass through to genuinely adopt a change.
Agile	An iterative approach to project management that delivers value in small increments, gathers feedback, and adapts. Scrum and Kanban are the two most common Agile frameworks.
BATNA	Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. Your plan B in any negotiation and the standard against which every proposed agreement must be measured.
BMC	Business Model Canvas. A one-page visual template for designing and stress-testing how a business creates, delivers, and captures value across nine building blocks.
Cognitive Type	The mode of thinking a framework primarily activates: Diagnostic (analysing what is happening), Generative (creating new options), Checklist (ensuring completeness), or Communication (structuring a message).
Complex Domain	In the Cynefin framework: a context where cause and effect can only be understood in retrospect. Requires experimentation rather than analysis or best practice.
Domain	In the Cynefin framework: one of five categories of context (Clear, Complicated, Complex, Chaotic, Disorder) each requiring a fundamentally different approach to decision-making.
GTD	Getting Things Done. David Allen's five-step personal productivity system: Capture, Clarify, Organise, Reflect, Engage.
HITL	Human-in-the-Loop. A four-step AI workflow model (Direct, Generate, Audit, Refine) that preserves human judgment and quality control in AI-assisted work.
JTBD	Jobs-to-be-Done. A framework that shifts focus from product features to the functional, emotional, and social progress customers are trying to make when they hire a product or service.
MECE	Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive. A principle for organising information so that categories have no overlaps and no gaps. Pronounced "mee-see."
OKR	Objective and Key Result. A goal-setting protocol pairing an inspiring Objective with three to five measurable Key Results that define what achieving the Objective looks like.
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed. A matrix for clarifying roles on every task or deliverable. There must be exactly one Accountable per task.
SCARF	Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness. The five social domains the brain monitors for threat or reward signals in every interaction.
Stage	In this book: one of the seven phases of professional thinking (Name, Understand, Generate, Decide, Act, Communicate, Sustain). Each stage contains frameworks suited to the cognitive work of that phase.
Time Signal	An indicator on each framework card showing whether the framework can be applied quickly (Quick, under 30 minutes) or requires deeper investment (Deep, hours or days).
WIP Limit	Work In Progress limit. In Kanban: a cap on the number of tasks allowed In Progress at any time. Forces finishing over starting and exposes bottlenecks.
WIIFM	What Is In It For Me. The question every individual asks when confronted with a change. Addressing it is the primary task of the Desire milestone in the ADKAR model.
ZOPA	Zone of Possible Agreement. In negotiation: the range between your reservation point and your counterpart's reservation point where a mutually acceptable deal can be found.

BACK MATTER

The Essential Library

Reference

Eight books that are the source code for the frameworks in this book

HOW TO USE THIS LIST

These are the primary sources. Each book is listed with the framework it anchors and one reason to read it beyond the card. Read the card when you need to act. Read the book when you want to understand deeply enough to adapt intelligently.

THE EIGHT BOOKS

Atomic Habits

James Clear · Anchors: Atomic Habits (Stage 7)

The definitive manual for behavioural change. Explains why identity-based habits outlast motivation-based ones.

Getting Things Done

David Allen · Anchors: GTD (Stage 7)

The modern bible of personal productivity. Explains why clearing your head is a prerequisite for clear thinking.

The Pyramid Principle

Barbara Minto · Anchors: Pyramid Principle (Stage 6)

The gold standard for executive communication. Gives you the MECE logic for building argument pyramids that hold up under scrutiny.

Blue Ocean Strategy

W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne · Anchors: Blue Ocean Strategy (Stage 3)

Challenges the assumption that you must compete. Gives you the Strategy Canvas and real cases of value innovation.

Leading Change

John P. Kotter · Anchors: Kotter's 8-Step Model (Stage 5)

Change is the hardest thing a leader does. Gives you the failure patterns most organisations repeat and how to avoid them.

Radical Candor

Kim Scott · Anchors: Radical Candor (Stage 6)

The full theory behind why most managers fall into Ruinous Empathy. Gives you practical tools for building a feedback culture where directness does not feel like an attack.

Thinking, Fast and Slow

Daniel Kahneman · Anchors: Cynefin Framework and Risk Assessment Matrix (Stages 1 and 4)

The foundational science of human decision-making. Gives you the cognitive bias research that explains why gut feel fails in complex situations.

The Mom Test

Rob Fitzpatrick · Anchors: Jobs-to-be-Done and Design Thinking (Stages 1 and 3)

The practical field manual for customer discovery. Gives you the conversational techniques that make the Empathise stage actually work.

CONCLUSION

You now have 41 tools.

The hard part is using them.

Final Word

Frameworks are not answers. They are the discipline of asking better questions before you act. The professional who reaches for a tool is not weaker than the one who improvises. They are more rigorous, more honest about the limits of intuition.

The real value accumulates over time. The first time you use SCARF before a difficult conversation you will feel the difference. The first time your Root Cause Analysis reveals a system failure beneath what everyone assumed was human error, the framework will have paid for itself.

Use this book at the stage where you are stuck. The situation is always the starting point. The framework is always in service of it.

A FINAL PRINCIPLE

Strategy is the art of sacrifice. Thinking is the discipline of clarity. Both require tools. This book is yours.

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FRAMEWORK THINKING
Version 3.0