GCX
Sustainability & Beyond.

15 WAYS TO MAKE **BETTER DECISIONS** IN TIMES OF CRISIS, **CHAOS & CHANGE.**

The ability to make timely, well-informed, and values-aligned decisions directly impacts a company's performance, resilience, and long-term relevance.

The data is clear— organisations that excel in strategic decision-making and execution consistently outperform their peers—often by a significant margin. It's not just about having the right strategy on paper; it's about having the clarity and conviction to act when it counts.

This guide is built on insights from tech founders, banking CEOs, executive coaches, and behavioural experts—backed by data and designed for action.

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STOP CHASING THE PERFECT DECISION.

There's a seductive myth in leadership that if we wait just a little longer, gather a bit more data, run one more workshop, or loop in one more stakeholder, we'll find the perfect decision. The magic one. The decision that keeps everyone happy, offends no one, and eliminates all risk. That myth is dangerous—and expensive.

Perfection is not a standard. It's a stall tactic.

What teams need is not perfection; it's momentum. As Deel's CRO Shuo Wang puts it, their superpower is "Deal Speed." Not reckless speed, but value-aligned action, even in uncertainty.

The smartest teams build for reversibility, not perfection. They design decisions so they can learn quickly, course-correct early, and act with enough clarity to move—rather than freeze.

Perfection is slow. And in a crisis, slow is dangerous.

Ask yourself: What would we do if we had to move on this today—without a perfect answer, but with a strong value-aligned bias for action?

KNOW THAT EVERY DECISION IS EMOTIONAL.

You're not choosing outcomes. You're choosing how you want to feel.

Most corporate decision-making processes assume people are rational, objective creatures who simply weigh evidence, compare outcomes, and act accordingly. This is, of course, nonsense.

As neuroscientists have shown, and as coaches like Joe Hudson (who works with the likes of OpenAI and Apple) have long known, we don't make decisions with data—we make them with emotion. Specifically, we project how we think we'll feel after the decision lands.

We don't choose the job or the sustainability initiative or the divestment strategy because it's "best." We choose it because we hope it'll make us feel successful. Or respected. Or less anxious. Or not rejected.

The trap? Most of us aren't aware of the emotion behind our decisions. So we pretend we're being strategic, while subconsciously we're avoiding discomfort.

We delay hiring because we fear conflict. We reject sustainability investments because we fear uncertainty. We overcomplicate strategies to avoid the fear of being wrong.

Great leaders don't bypass emotion. They become fluent in it.

They know when fear is valid, and when it's hiding a truth. They recognise the difference between intuitive clarity and stress-induced contraction. And they don't mistake a 50-slide deck for a decision made.

Try this check-in: What am I actually trying to avoid feeling right now? And what might happen if I welcomed it instead of dodging it?

BUILD A CULTURE THAT CAN MOVE WITHOUT YOU.

When the house is on fire, the last thing you want is a team waiting for the CEO to tell them where the fire extinguisher is. A healthy decision-making culture doesn't need top-down direction for every move. It needs clarity of purpose, operationalised values, and trust in local judgment.

Deel is a powerful case study. With 3,000+ employees across 110 countries, they've scaled decision-making through cultural codification. "Deal Speed" and "Care" aren't posters in a hallway—they're lived values. Built into hiring. Measured in performance. Reinforced in rituals. And used as filters for day-to-day calls, whether it's product rollout, client service, or internal ops.
What happens when a company gets this right? Leaders become multipliers, not bottlenecks. Teams move with autonomy. And crises are met with coherence—not chaos.

Contrast this with organisations where even basic decisions require cross-functional consensus, weeks of back-and-forth, and a C-level blessing. It's not process. It's paralysis.

Culture is what happens when no one's watching. If your culture doesn't support aligned action under pressure, it's not ready for the future.

Ask yourself: Do our people know how to act in a way that reflects our values—without asking for permission?

DATA ISN'T INSIGHT— INTERPRETATION IS.

Your biggest risk isn't a lack of data. It's drowning in the wrong kind.

We're living through a data glut. Carbon metrics, customer sentiment trackers, risk maps, market forecasts, real-time ESG benchmarks—there's more information than ever. And still, teams are paralysed.

Why? Because data doesn't make decisions—humans do. And humans don't need more dashboards. They need insight.

As RMB's CEO James Formby notes, the real power lies not in the accumulation of data, but in how it's positioned close to the business. At RMB, data science teams don't sit in the basement—they sit next to the decision-makers. They don't just feed reports upwards—they translate complexity into meaning. Into moves.

This is crucial, especially in ESG and sustainability work. If you can't tell a clear story about your emissions and risks, or your social impact strategy—if the data doesn't change behaviour—it's just well-decorated noise.

Corporate consciousness means asking better questions of your data. Not "what does it say?" but "what does it reveal?" Not "can we measure it?" but "does this help us act?"

Practical lens: What decisions are we actually supporting with this data—and what conversations are we avoiding by hiding behind it?

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ALIGN THE DECISION WITH YOUR VALUES, NOT JUST THE OUTCOME.

There's a pivotal moment in every tough decision where you have to choose between what looks smart and what feels right. One is usually shiny, defensible, maybe even applauded by stakeholders. The other? A little harder to explain. A little less immediately profitable. But deeply, undeniably aligned.

This is where values aren't just posters or onboarding slides—they're operational.

This is corporate consciousness in action. Patagonia didn't become the darling of climate-positive capitalism by being perfect.

They became it by being principled. Salesforce didn't enter the social justice space because it was profitable. They did it because it was consistent with who they say they are.

A good decision isn't one that avoids discomfort. It's one that allows you to sleep at night, look your team in the eye, and not flinch when your grandkids ask what you did during the crisis.

Filter to try: If we stripped away PR, optics, and shareholder pressure—what choice would we still feel proud of?

COLLAPSE COMPLEXITY WITH THE ‘NEXT MOST OBVIOUS STEP’.

When the pressure’s on, leaders tend to respond in one of two ways: freeze or flail. Both are symptoms of overwhelm. The mind races, the data piles up, and suddenly, even choosing where to start becomes a source of dread. Welcome to the fog.

Joe Hudson’s antidote is as deceptively simple as it is profound: just take the next most obvious step. Not the final step. Not the most impressive one. The next clear move that brings you closer to clarity.

This doesn’t mean making impulsive decisions. It means cutting through the mental theatre and reconnecting with what’s immediately true. Do you need one more data point? A difficult conversation? A walk around the block? A call with a mentor?

Most great decision-makers aren’t the ones with the biggest intellects. They’re the ones who keep moving, step by step, without collapsing under the weight of needing to know everything.

In sustainability, in systems thinking, in business transformation, this is crucial. The path is never fully known. But clarity compounds with every courageous step.

Try this: When the team is stuck, ask: What’s the smallest action we can take right now to reduce confusion by 5%? Then do it.

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ETHICS AND TRUST ARE DECISION INFRASTRUCTURE.

In the old economy, trust was a marketing strategy. In the new economy, it's infrastructure.

James Formby of RMB talks about treating data ethics not as a regulatory hoop but as a foundation for all decision-making. That's the essence of corporate consciousness: decisions that don't just look right—they are right, even when no one's watching.

The same applies in sustainability. If your ESG metrics are massaged, if your climate pledges are vague, if you're saying "carbon neutral" while dodging Scope 3 emissions—you're not future-proofing. You're gambling with trust.

And the thing about trust? You can't buy it back.

True ethical leadership shows up not when it's convenient, but when it's costly. When you turn down that high-emitting client.

When you slow down to get the impact report right. When you choose transparency over polish—even if it raises uncomfortable questions.

This isn't about performative wokeness. It's about alignment. Integrity. And the deep, strategic knowing that decisions grounded in ethics will outlast every quarterly report.

Hard test: If every part of this decision process was made public—would we stand by it without spin?

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SAY NO FASTER.

Most organisations don’t suffer from a lack of opportunity. They suffer from an inability to say no. The cost? Strategy dilution, team burnout, cultural compromise, and a backlog of initiatives that should’ve been killed long ago.

Saying yes is easy. It makes you feel generous, collaborative, open. But every yes is also a commitment of time, energy, credibility, and alignment. And every misaligned yes is a slow leak of your company’s soul.

Deel gets this right. Their leadership teams are empowered to filter ruthlessly based on two values: Speed and Care. If a hire, a project, or a proposal doesn’t match both—it’s a no. Quickly. Cleanly. Without guilt.

We’ve helped leadership teams build “No Lists”—pre-defined boundaries that protect focus and coherence. It’s not about rigidity. It’s about protecting the system from low-level entropy. From energy sinks. From compromise that starts small and grows teeth.

In a world asking businesses to stand for something, clarity is currency. And clarity means sometimes saying: “That’s not for us.”

Try this audit: What projects, clients, or hires are we tolerating right now that don’t fit who we are? Why are we still saying yes?

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STOP OUTSOURCING TO THE FUTURE.

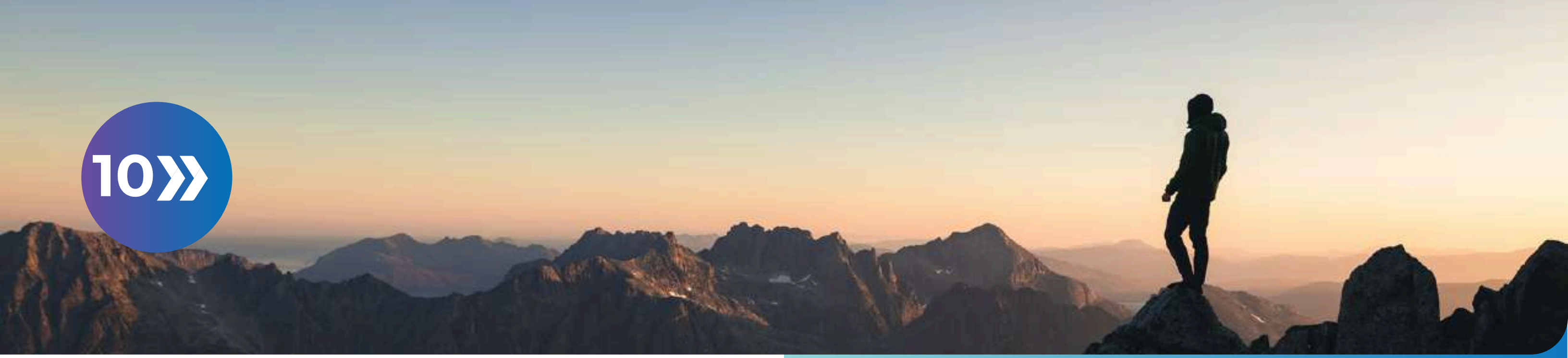
Every leader has done it: kicked a hard decision down the road, waiting for "more data," "a better moment," or that elusive thing called clarity. The problem? Future You isn't any braver than Present You. And every delay compounds cost—real and emotional.

This is what Joe Hudson calls “the fallacy of deferred discomfort.” We don’t delay because the decision isn’t ready. We delay because we aren’t ready to feel what it might bring—disappointment, risk, regret, confrontation.

But here's the truth: clarity rarely lands fully formed in your inbox. It shows up as a whisper during a walk, a gut-punch in a meeting, or a persistent unease you can't shake. And when you ignore it long enough, the decision eventually makes itself—for better or worse.

Corporate consciousness means being willing to sit with the discomfort, to look at what’s not working, and to choose presence over postponement. If your business is always “waiting for the right time,” the right time has probably already passed.

Check yourself: What decision have we already made emotionally—but haven’t had the courage to formalise?



THE BEST DECISIONS OFTEN DON'T FEEL LIKE DECISIONS.

We tend to romanticise big decisions: the moment of courage, the dramatic choice, the boardroom battle.

But in our experience with truly aligned organisations, the best decisions aren't grand—they're inevitable. They unfold quietly. They feel calm. They feel... done.

That's because the groundwork has been laid. The values are embedded. The data makes sense. The emotion is integrated. The team is aligned. The path doesn't need to be forced—it emerges.

This isn't magic. It's what happens when you move from firefighting to foresight. When decision-making becomes an ecosystem, not an event.

So if your decisions are always dramatic, always exhausting, always contested—ask yourself: what's missing from the system? Where is the fear, the disconnect, the noise?

When decision-making is embedded in culture, not just strategy, it starts to feel like the next obvious step. Not because it's easy. But because it's right.

Watch for the shift: When the push turns to pull, you're no longer making the decision. You're stepping into it.

MAKE CORPORATE CONSCIOUSNESS THE COMPASS.

In a world that's burning, polarising, and digitising all at once, neutrality is a dangerous illusion. Every decision your business makes—what to build, who to hire, who to serve, how to operate—is a moral decision, whether you admit it or not.

Corporate consciousness is the awareness that your organisation has an identity, a personality, and a responsibility beyond profit. It's not fluff. It's competitive advantage. It's the reason clients stay, talent joins, and the media can't quite cancel you.

This doesn't mean becoming perfect. It means becoming aware. Of your impacts. Of your blind spots. Of your unintended consequences.

It means asking:

- **What does this decision say about us?**
- **What future does it help create?**
- **Who gets helped—and who gets harmed?**

Businesses have adjusted pricing models because they saw how their margins exploited small businesses.

Consulting firms have turned away contracts because their sustainability commitments finally meant something.

This isn't strategy. It's conscience. And it's rare. Which is exactly why it matters.

Conscious prompt: If our company were a human being we respected—what would they choose right now?

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CHOOSE IDENTITY OVER STRATEGY.

The question isn't "What's smart?"—it's "Who are we becoming?"

Strategy changes. Markets evolve. Data shifts. What doesn't change is your company's core identity—the DNA of who you are and what you stand for.

And in uncertain times, identity beats strategy every time. Because strategy tells you what to do. Identity tells you what to protect.

When tough decisions land on your desk—when the numbers don't align, when the board wants more speed, when your people want more substance—it's your identity that holds the line.

Tesla didn't become Tesla by looking for a safe go-to-market plan. They doubled down on who they wanted to be: a company willing to electrify everything, even when it meant losing sleep, capital, and friends.

Same for Patagonia, Salesforce, even small, values-driven firms you've never heard of. The principle holds: When you lead from identity, decisions become clearer. Bolder. More resilient.

Final lens: What would the future version of our company thank us for choosing today?

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RECOGNISE AND NEUTRALISE COGNITIVE BIASES.

Even the sharpest executive is subject to cognitive traps. The mind is a pattern-seeking machine, constantly filtering and simplifying reality. Useful when choosing lunch. Dangerous when deciding strategy.

Daniel Kahneman—who literally wrote the book on this—warns that "we think we're more rational than we are... we believe in our reasons because we've already made the decision." That's confirmation bias at work.

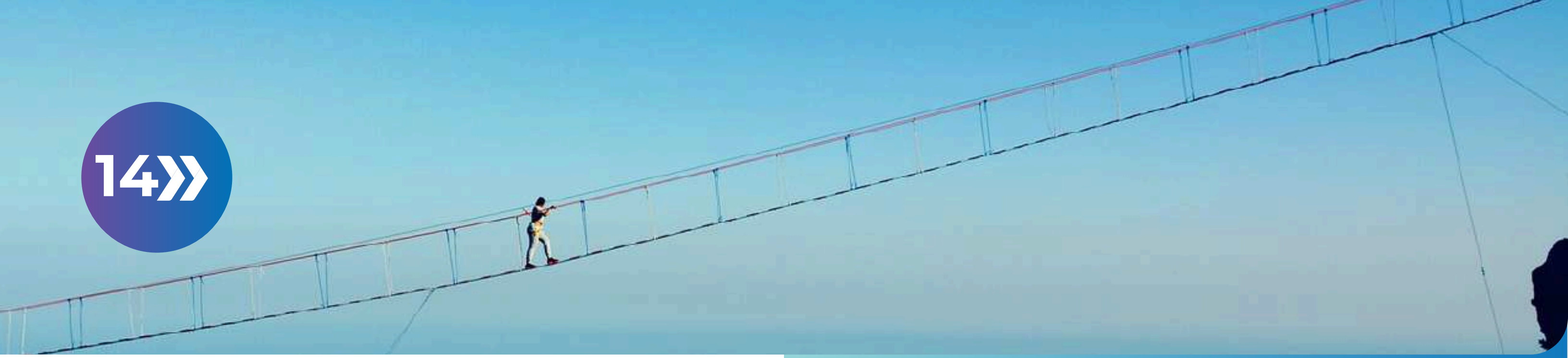
But it doesn't stop there:

- Anchoring bias locks you to the first number you hear.
- Groupthink makes you nod along instead of challenging ideas.
- Overconfidence bias convinces you your plan is bulletproof—until it's not.

And let's not forget fear of failure, which quietly sabotages risk-taking under the guise of caution. Or the seductive pull of consensus, which smooths conflict but flattens critical thinking.

Recognising these biases isn't just intellectual hygiene—it's strategic armour. We've seen too many transformation projects torpedoed by untested assumptions and too much certainty in the boardroom.

Tool to try: Before finalising any high-stakes decision, assign a team member the role of "bias buster." Ask: What might we be missing because we want to be right?



USE A STRUCTURED FRAMEWORK— ESPECIALLY UNDER PRESSURE.

Most organisations still make major decisions by default: gut instinct, consensus by exhaustion, or power-based decree. But when the stakes are high and time is tight, instinct is exactly what needs to be tempered—not trusted blindly.

Chip and Dan Heath's WRAP framework offers one of the most practical approaches out there:

Widen your options
Reality-test your assumptions
Attain distance before deciding
Prepare to be wrong

This model is tailor-made for complex environments—especially when sustainability, transformation, or reputation are on the line. It breaks the "narrow frame" that traps so many leadership teams into binary thinking: yes or no, this or that, safe or risky.

WRAP forces us to pressure-test assumptions, expand our field of view, and inject humility into our forecasting. And that humility? That's what keeps companies from overcommitting to ideas that don't survive contact with reality.

Tip: If your strategy session feels like a flip of the coin—or a tug-of-war—pause and apply WRAP. The result won't just be a better answer. It'll be a wiser process.

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ACCEPT THAT BOUNDED RATIONALITY IS THE GAME—NOT THE EXCEPTION.

Let's get honest: no one is making perfectly rational decisions. Ever.

We operate with limited time, limited information, cognitive overload, and competing priorities. This is what Herbert Simon coined bounded rationality—and it's the air we all breathe in business. It means we're not flawed when we make imperfect calls. We're just human.

The danger comes when we pretend otherwise. When leaders posture as hyper-rational, over-confident, "data-led" decision-makers—while quietly making choices based on hunches, headlines, or internal politics.

Corporate consciousness begins with acknowledging limitations. It says: We can't be perfect, but we can be transparent. We can't predict everything, but we can prepare to be wrong. We can design systems that help us act wisely under constraint.

This is why slowing down, as Kahneman suggests, can be a radical act. Reflection isn't weakness. It's discipline. Especially when speed is being used to mask fear.

Leadership move: Normalise bounded rationality in your team. Build in reflection time. Track your misses. Reward intellectual humility—not just confidence.

