BY ERIC HATHAWAY · SEPTEMBER 2026

WE'VE DONE IT BACKWARDS

We put AI on every desk and left the room that decides exactly as it was. **Flip the order: decide in days, and let the weeks be work.**



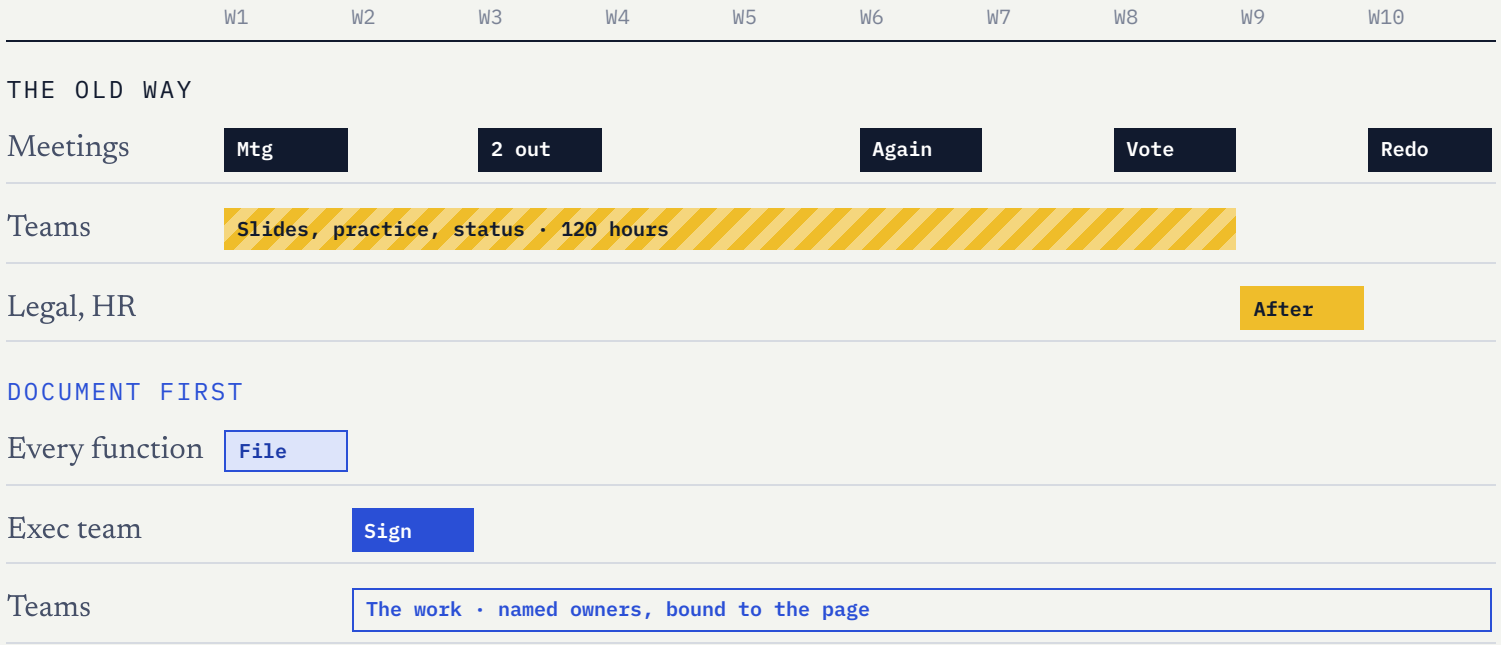
ILLUSTRATIVE

ONE OPERATING QUESTION TAKES TEN WEEKS, AND NOBODY SIGNS.

The call: an 800-person company asks whether to combine its East and West support offices, because West wait times are the problem.

The old way: three executive meetings with chairs empty, weeks of slides, and Legal and HR hearing about it after the vote.

Week 10: fourteen people still guessing their jobs, and the wait times haven't moved.



A composite of a meeting every operator knows, not a named firm.

Black is a meeting · yellow is prep · blue is the file, the signature and the work

DECIDE IN DAYS. LET THE WEEKS BE WORK.



1

Write the question

One sentence a person can sign, not a topic that breeds decks.

2

Give every function a seat

Its own data, limits and history, so finance attacks cash and operations attacks what breaks.

3

Run three rounds

Hidden facts, then a vote with conditions, then a binding vote, with a neutral middle.

4

Ship one file

The answer, the vote by seat, the losing side and the facts that force a reopen.

5

Hold one meeting

Sign or send it back, and every why-not points at a page.

MEASURED

PEOPLE GOT FASTER. ALMOST NO COMPANY GOT RICHER.

80%

of respondents say AI made them personally more productive

QUESTION 1 · THEIR OWN WORK

37%

say their company saw any EBIT impact from AI at all

QUESTION 2 · COMPANY EARNINGS

6%

work at a company earning 5% or more of its EBIT from AI

QUESTION 2 · COMPANY EARNINGS

McKinsey, State of AI 2026 · 1,719 respondents. Two different questions, not a funnel.

Separately, 81% of organizations report no meaningful bottom-line gain · McKinsey 2026

MEASURED

WE LOADED THE DOING LEVEL AND LEFT THE DECISIONING LEVEL EMPTY.

DECISIONING LEVEL

WE LEFT THIS EMPTY

The written question, the functions that have to sit in and the page one person signs.

Signed _____

17%

of CXOs actively use AI in strategic decisions

CAPGEMINI 2026 · 500 CXOS

15%

of 365 companies decided effectively

BAIN 2006

DOING LEVEL

WE LOADED THIS

Every desk, every agent and every private deck, pushing output up into a room that still decides the old way.



75%

of knowledge workers use generative AI at work

WTI 2024 · 31,000 WORKERS

78%

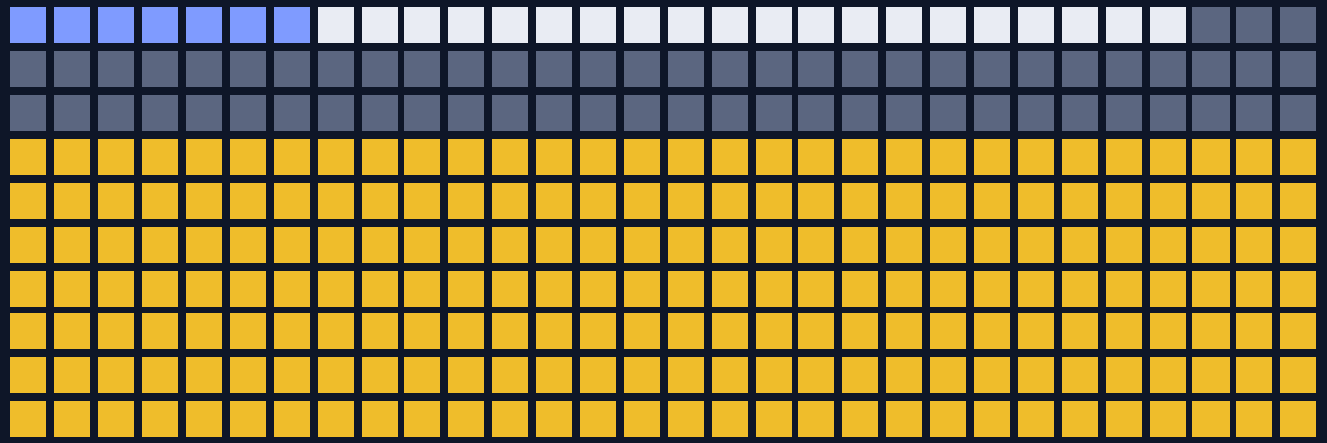
of those AI users bring their own tools

WTI 2024

Each figure is a share of the group named in its label.

MEASURED

OF 300,000 HOURS BEHIND ONE WEEKLY MEETING, 7,000 ARE THE MEETING.



The executive meeting itself	7,000
11 unit-head briefings	20,000
21 team meetings	63,000
130 prep meetings	210,000

Each square is 1,000 person-hours a year · Mankins, Brahm and Caimi, HBR 2014 · slide work not counted

Bain 2006: about 15% of 365 companies decided effectively

ILLUSTRATIVE

THE ROOM READS A FILE, NOT A DECK.

The losing side stays on the page

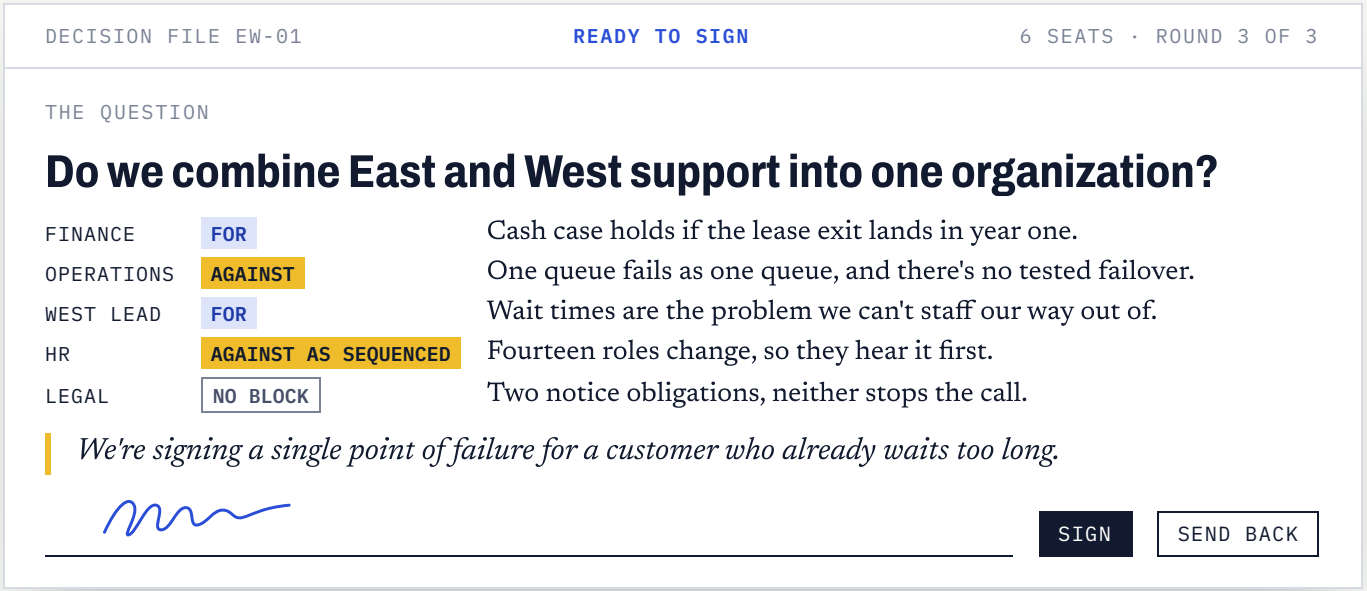
Operations said no and why, in its own words, before the COO signed.

Unsourced claims get stripped, visibly

Nothing reaches the signer without a source in some seat's own data.

Reopen facts replace re-debates

The conditions that force a new session are named before the work starts.



Illustrative decision file, not a named firm

The full file, with owners and reopen facts, is Exhibit 08 in the paper

MEASURED · 2025 AND 2026 DATA

YOU'RE ALREADY PAYING FOR THE PILE.

2 min

between interruptions for the heaviest users during core hours

MICROSOFT 2025

22%

of managers worldwide are engaged, down from 31% in 2022

GALLUP 2026

12%

median US voluntary turnover in 2025, against 9% before the pandemic

SHRM 2025

80%

of workers and leaders say they lack the time or energy to do their work

MICROSOFT WTI 2025

PowerPoint edits jump 122% in the final 10 minutes before a meeting · Microsoft 2025

None of this is a savings claim for a named company

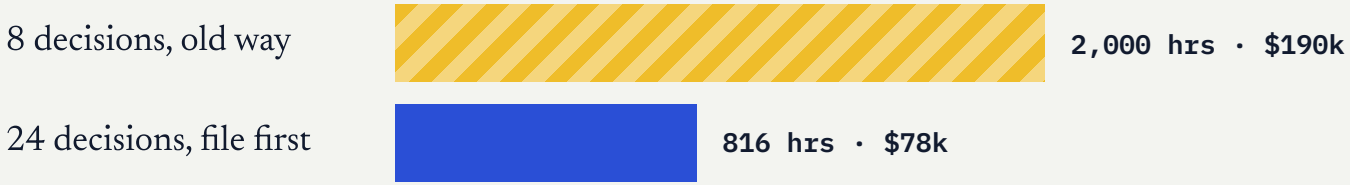
CONSTRUCTED

ONE DECISION TAKES 250 HOURS THE OLD WAY AND 34 IN A FILE.

ONE DECISION · LABOR AT $95 AN HOUR



A YEAR OF DECISIONS



1,184

hours back in one year for an 800-person company

$112k

of labor, priced at $95 an hour

3×

the signed decisions, 24 against 8

$95 blends loaded operations ($75) and financial manager ($119) rates · BLS OEWS May 2025, ECEC June 2026, ×1.481

A floor, not a named-firm return

CONSTRUCTED

SAME CALENDAR: 40 SIGNED DECISIONS AGAINST 12.

Decides document first

EXEC TEAM 2 A MONTH · BOARD 4 A QUARTER



40

Still in ten-week piles

EXEC TEAM 8 AT BEST · BOARD 1 PER PACKET



12

Exec team, 24 · Board, 16 · Exec team, 8 · Board, 4

Each dot is one signed decision · an example year, not a trial

12 is the old way's good year · many companies get the slide pile instead

CONSTRUCTED

FORTY HOURS BACK. TWENTY-EIGHT MORE DECISIONS SIGNED.

ONE DECISION

Weeks to a signature THREE MEETINGS, OR ONE	**10 → 2 weeks**
Your own hours in it MEETINGS AND PRE-READS, AGAINST ONE PAGE AND ONE SIGNING	**7.5 → 1.25 hrs**

A YEAR OF THEM

Your hours in decision meetings	**90 → 50 hrs**
Decisions that actually get signed	**12 → 40**

40

hours a year back from your own calendar

28

more decisions signed, same year

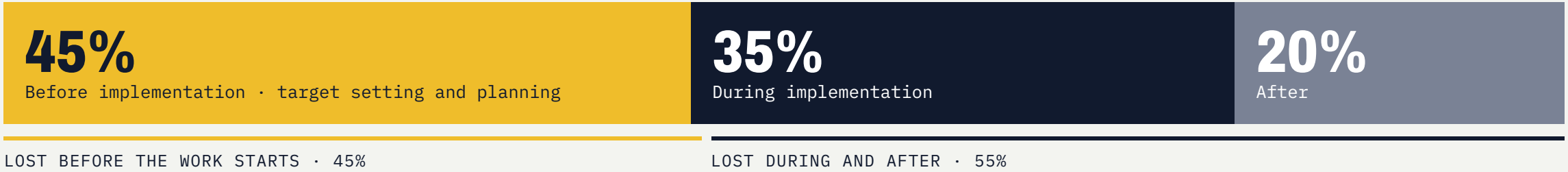
3.3×

the signed work for the teams

Every line is Exhibit 08 arithmetic on a made-up company at public pay rates. Not a result any firm has reported.

MEASURED

NEARLY HALF THE VALUE THAT GETS LOST IS GONE BEFORE THE WORK STARTS.



31%

of transformations improved performance and sustained it

67%

of maximum benefit captured by the ones called successful

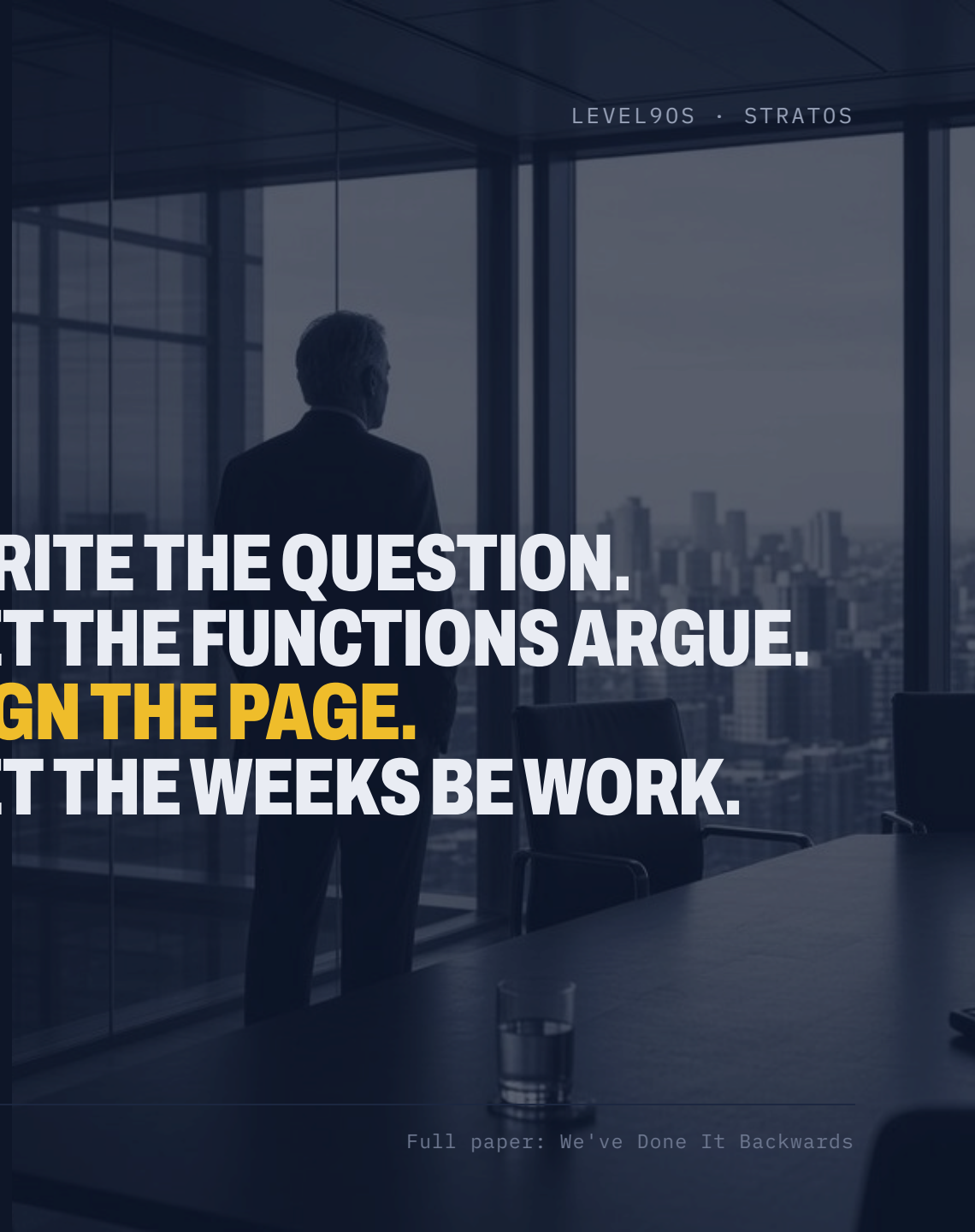
37%

of potential benefit captured by everyone else

McKinsey, "Losing from day one," 2021 · 1,034 respondents · shares of value lost, not of total value 45% and 35% follow from the reported 55% and 20%

CHANGE THE KIND OF MISS.

Today the miss is internal, because nobody owned the answer and the customer left while the company was still in slides. Decide first, and whatever miss remains belongs to the market, where a call was made, signed and simply wrong.



WRITE THE QUESTION.
LET THE FUNCTIONS ARGUE.
SIGN THE PAGE.
LET THE WEEKS BE WORK.

We had an engine built for exactly this work, and we used it to write email.

SOURCES AND METHOD

MEASURED CONSTRUCTED ILLUSTRATIVE

EVERY NUMBER, WHERE IT CAME FROM.

McKinsey / QuantumBlack, The State of AI in 2026. 1,719 respondents, 97 countries.

McKinsey, State of Organizations 2026. 10,000+ senior executives.

McKinsey Global Survey, "Losing from day one," 2021, n=1,034.

Microsoft / LinkedIn, Work Trend Index 2024. 31,000 knowledge workers, 31 countries.

Microsoft, infinite workday special report, June 2025. M365 telemetry and 31,000-person survey.

Capgemini Research Institute, Inside the C-Suite, 2026. 500 CXOs.

Rogers and Blenko, Bain, "Who has the D?", 2006. 365 companies.

Mankins, Brahm and Caimi, "Your Scarcest Resource," HBR / Bain, 2014.

Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026, 2025 data.

SHRM, 2025 CHRO Benchmarking.

Kaesberg et al., "Voting or Consensus?", ACL 2025.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics, OEWS May 2025; ECEC June 2026 (management, business and financial), ×1.481.

Constructed figures are our arithmetic on BLS loaded rates and the paper's decision clocks. They're floors, not named-firm returns.

Illustrative material, including the East-West company and its decision file, is a composite, not a real firm.