LEVEL9 · WORKING PAPER · THE DECISION LEVEL · BY ERIC HATHAWAY · SEPTEMBER 2026 · SOURCES NAMED IN THE TEXT

WE'VE DONE IT BACKWARDS

For forty years companies have decided slowly and then demanded that the work go fast, and when AI arrived we gave it to every desk and kept feeding the same slow room. So flip the order: decide in days, and let the weeks be work.



6 to 10 weeks
for the company in this paper to reach a signed answer on one operating question.

EXAMPLE · CHAPTER 1

80%
of AI survey respondents say it made them personally more productive.

About 2%
of the 300,000 hours a year behind one weekly executive meeting are the meeting itself. The rest is briefings, team meetings and prep.

MANKINS, BRAHM, CAIMI · HBR 2014

THE SHORT VERSION

FIVE POINTS, ONE PER CHAPTER.

Five points, one per chapter. It's about half an hour to read, or eleven minutes for the audio companion, and if you only read this page, look at the decision file in Exhibit 04 next.

Same question, two calendars.

10 → 2

An 800-person company spends six to ten weeks of slides on one question and still nobody signs. In the other order, the engine runs the rooms in a day, every executive reads their own page, and the answer gets signed at the first meeting, or the second at most.

Every executive walks in knowing the room.

1 day

The engine builds the rooms the question needs, runs three rounds in each and forces dissent when a room agrees too fast. Two weeks end to end: a week for the seats to file what only they have, a day for the engine to run the rooms, then one meeting. A day after the seats file, every executive and board member has their own page: what was decided, what to look at, how everyone else voted and every risk. The meeting argues about facts, not the deck.

It already works at the desk. The table never tried it.

40%

Controlled studies show people who get the information up front finish work 25 to 40 percent faster, and one person with AI can match a two-person team. Yet only one executive in six uses AI for strategic decisions.

What it costs, and what you get back.

250 → 34

Counted line by line, one decision drops from about 250 hours of people's time to about 34, which on a normal calendar means around 40 signed decisions a year instead of 12, and three times as much signed work for the teams.

Start with one question.

5 to 10

Pick a question that's already on a calendar, write it down, pick the rooms, run it through the engine, and walk into the first meeting knowing the room.

CHAPTER 01 · THE CALL

SAME QUESTION. TEN WEEKS, OR TWO.

It starts small. The CEO, the COO and the CFO agree the executive team should hear it, so a meeting goes on the calendar a week out. Two people turn out to be traveling. Staff starts building slides, and nobody has the full picture, so week one isn't a decision. It's a hunt for numbers.

Then the rest of the company gets pulled in, and teams start meeting to get ready for meetings. The team presents. Nobody signs. Someone suggests two more weeks for comments.

At the third meeting they vote while the two who missed the first ones are still reading last week's deck. Legal and HR were never in the room, so they hear about it afterward, and everyone meets again.

Six to ten weeks in, the teams are guessing at their jobs from a decision they only half heard. The fourteen people whose roles change still don't know what happens to them. West wait times haven't moved. The customer who was already waiting too long didn't stay for the third meeting.

EXHIBIT 01 **Same week, two desks. Neither one has what the other has.**

EXAMPLE

UPSTAIRS · THE COO

You asked for a decision. You got a presentation.

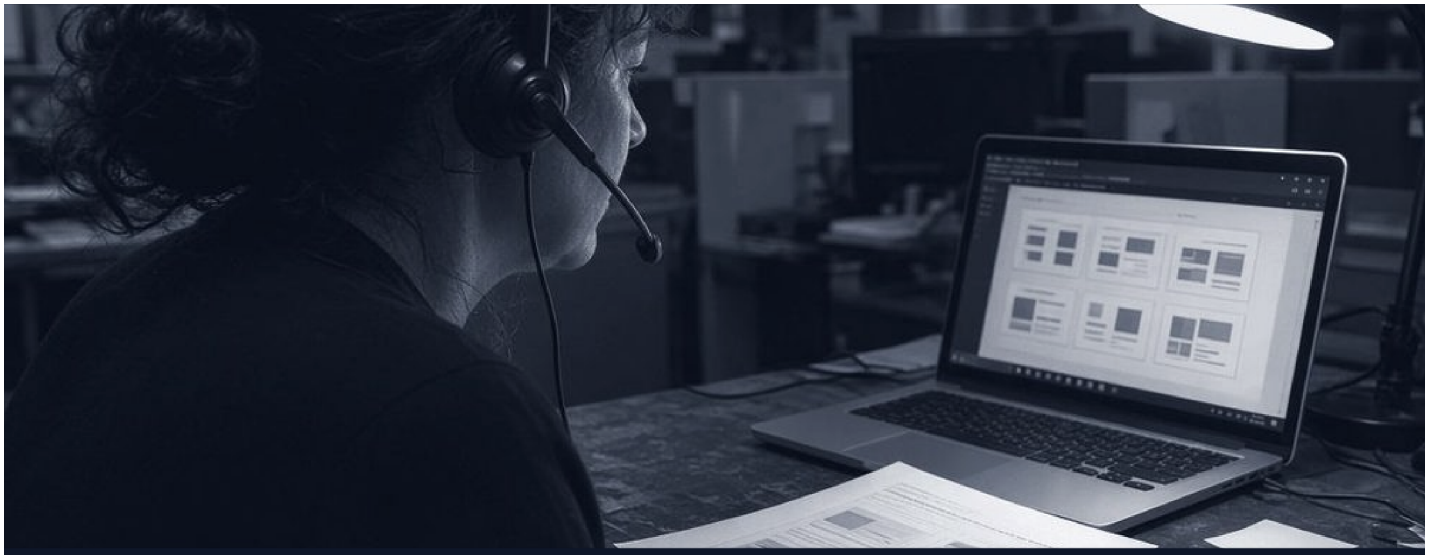
You've asked for a decision three times and gotten a presentation each time: two empty chairs, ninety minutes, twenty slides and no Legal or HR in the room. You have the cost target, but no answer you can hand the teams.

DOWNSTAIRS · THE WEST OFFICE LEAD

It's Sunday night. You're on slide version seven.

Your team met twice so your boss wouldn't be surprised. You have the wait times and the fourteen people, but not the cost target, and nobody has asked you for the one thing only you know. The facts that decide this call sit on two different floors, and the process spends ten weeks making sure they never land on the same page.

The facts that decide this call sit on two different floors, and the process spends ten weeks making sure they never land on the same page.



DOWNSTAIRS, THE SAME WEEK

Sunday night, version seven. The wait times and the fourteen people whose jobs change sit on this desk. The cost target does not.

Now run it in the other order.

On Monday the COO asks the same question as one sentence someone can sign: do we combine East and West support into one organization? The CEO doesn't book a meeting. The CEO says push it through the engine and see how the executive team, the board and the innovation team respond.

This is the part people get wrong. The engine doesn't hand down a signed answer that everyone nods along to. It does the prep that used to take ten weeks, before anyone walks into the room. A day later every executive and every board member has their own page, and the first meeting is about the real disagreements instead of who read the deck. The weeks that used to go to the vote now go to the work.

EXHIBIT 02 **Same question, two calendars. The old way spends ten weeks getting to a vote.**

EXAMPLE

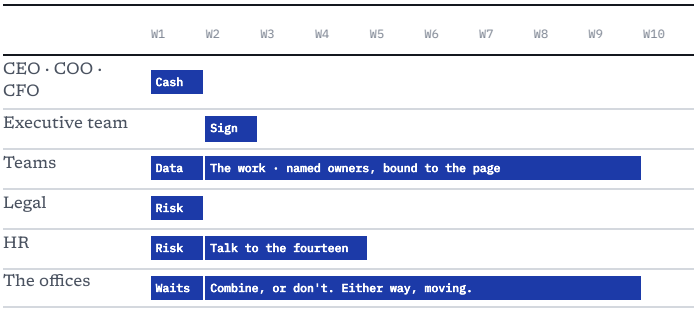
The way it usually goes

Six to ten weeks of slides



Same company, document first

A week of filing, a day for the engine, then one meeting



This shows the shape of the work, not a stopwatch on a real firm. Black blocks are meetings, yellow is prep, and blue is the file, the signature and the work after it.

CHAPTER 02 · THE METHOD

EVERY EXECUTIVE WALKS IN KNOWING THE ROOM.

Start with a sentence someone can sign.

"Support strategy" is a topic, and topics make decks. "Do we combine East and West support?" is a question someone can put their name under, and it tells you who needs to weigh in and what a finished answer looks like.

The engine then builds the rooms the question needs, in the order it needs them. For East-West that's the executive team, the board and an innovation team. Each room seats up to ten members, and each one brings its own data, its own limits and its own vote.

EXHIBIT 03 **One question, nine steps.**

EXAMPLE

01 **Write it**
One sentence a person can sign, like "Do we combine East and West support?"
OWNER

02 **Round one**
Each seat files the facts only it has, its limits and what would change its mind.
ALL SEATS

◆ **Check-in**
The facilitators map where the seats clash and lay out the options.
FACILITATORS

03 **Round two**
Each seat votes on the options and names its conditions.
ALL SEATS

◆ **Check-in**
The facilitators rework the leading option around those conditions and pull in any missing facts.
FACILITATORS

04 **Round three**
The final vote: for, against, or for with an exception on the record.
ALL SEATS

05 **The file**
One shared file, plus a page for every executive: the answer, the proof, the losing side and who does what.
FACILITATORS WRITE IT

06 **Sign**
One person signs or sends it back, pointing to the page.
ONE OWNER

07 **Work**
Named owners get to work, and nobody reopens the debate.
THE TEAMS

Circles are rounds. Diamonds are check-ins run by the facilitators, who take no side. This is one room; bigger questions run the same steps in more rooms. You pick who fills each seat: the actual owner, or whoever knows that job best.

Three rounds, each with one job.

The rounds aren't more talking. The first gets the facts only one seat has onto the table, the second is a vote where every seat names its conditions, and the third is the final vote on the reworked answer. Research on groups points the same way. How a group closes a decision matters more than how long it argues, and structured voting beats open-ended consensus-seeking (Kaesberg et al., ACL 2025), and AI models drift toward whatever the person asking already believes (Sharma et al., ICLR 2024), so each round is short and has a single job. And when drift detection sees a room agreeing too fast with no new facts, the engine makes at least two seats argue the other side before the final vote.

Real seats, not one voice in ten hats.

A finance seat isn't a chatbot told to act like the CFO. Ask one model the same question ten ways and the answers drift toward agreement, usually with made-up support sitting right next to them, because agreeing is the easy path.

A real seat brings its own data, the limits of its job and a record of what it argued last time, so finance fights for cash while operations fights for what breaks when one office becomes the only office. Each seat pulls from the company's own numbers, fresh market research, the risks and what the team can actually carry. If they all sound like the same reasonable person by lunch, you don't have a debate. You have a press release.

Multi-model, with drift detection.

The engine is multi-model, and every seat gets its input from its own independent agent, so one model's blind spots don't become the whole room's. Drift detection watches every room for the slide toward easy agreement: unanimous votes, confidence bunching together, dissent going quiet. When it sees that, the engine forces the argument back onto the table.

Fourteen facilitators, and none of them votes.

Between rounds, fourteen facilitators check the work: whether the room brought up facts only one seat had or just repeated the shared slides, whether anyone changed a vote without a reason, and whether every claim traces back to where it came from. Then they write it all down: the options, who pushed back on what, the vote by seat and what's still missing.

A facilitator can't carry its own version of the story, or you've just built a second decision-maker. The record is locked, and every step, vote and source is open to every member of the team, so nobody can quietly steer it.

Every executive gets their own page.

A day after the question goes in, every executive and every board member has their own page. Take the CMO. It shows what the rooms decided, the facts the CMO should be looking at, how every other seat voted and why, and every risk on the table, with everyone else's answers one click away. Now the CMO can agree or disagree with all of it.

BEFORE MEETING ONE **This is what everyone has before meeting one.**

EXAMPLE

A day after the question went in, every executive and every board member held their own page: what the rooms decided, the facts for their seat, how every other seat voted and why, and every risk on the table. Three of those pages are reproduced in full in **Appendix A, B and C**: the CEO's, the COO's and the CFO's. Same decision, same facts, three different jobs to do in the room.

Nobody says "I don't agree with the AI."

The pushback gets specific instead. "I'm a no for now. Section 5, Exhibit A. The customer data is 8 percent off what we're seeing, and that changes the numbers. My team is checking how much it matters, and I'll have it to you tomorrow." Legal's two requirements were already on the page, with the board

room's answer: on this timeline, with these blockers, if you all agree, move.

Behind those pages sits one shared file, and it is the thing that gets signed. This is the East-West file on the morning the COO signs it.

EXHIBIT 04 **The file the room signs. Not a deck.** EXAMPLE

THE QUESTION	Do we combine East and West support into one organization?
RECOMMENDED ANSWER	Combine into one support organization across both sites while keeping both locations open through the transition, and gate the cutover on a tested failover.
THE LOSING SIDE, IN ITS OWN WORDS	We're signing a single point of failure for a customer who already waits too long. Show us failover working before the cutover date, not after. Operations seat · kept on the page per R4
WHO DOES THE WORK	Operations: failover test, as the cutover gate HR: role conversations with all fourteen, first Finance: lease exit plan East lead: cross-training schedule
REOPEN FACTS	The failover test fails West wait times rise during cutover The lease exit slips past year one
STRIPPED CLAIMS	"Customers won't notice the change." was removed under R3, because no seat's file had a source for it. Sign Send back COO · owns the outcome · if "send back," cite the page

A made-up example, not a real firm. The pages above show how each seat voted; this is the record they all point at, including the claims that got cut and the conditions the plan now has to meet.

Operations lost the vote and won the gate.

Look at what happened to the losing side. Operations voted against, and its condition, a tested failover before cutover, became the gate the whole plan has to pass. That's the difference between losing an argument and being ignored, because the concern lives in the file with an owner, and if the failover test fails, the decision reopens on its own.

Meeting one. Meeting two at the most.

Everyone walks in already knowing the room, so the argument is about 8 percent, not about who read the deck. Six to ten weeks becomes two, and the staff hours on the decision drop by about 86 percent. In less than a day, for less than one executive meeting costs, any question can run through it. After the signature, any meeting that isn't doing the work or dealing with a reopen fact, one of the named facts that would force a fresh look, is a leak.

Build the rooms you don't have.

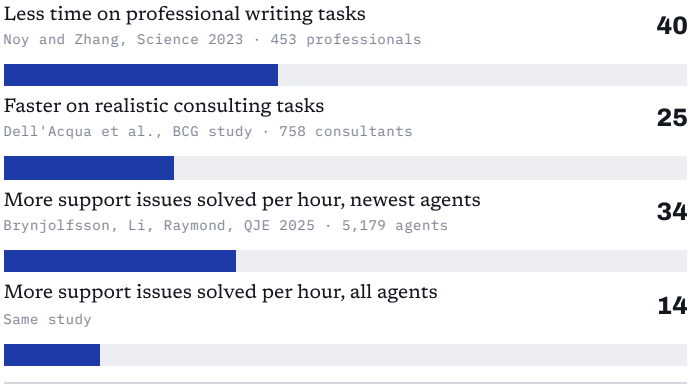
If you don't have an innovation team or an investor forum, build one. Copy your executive team, add the roles you don't have yet, or build a board to test the call against. As the CEO you get to hold that board to account, and you walk in knowing three quarters of the room, often with half of it handled before you sit down. The same file moves from room to room without anyone rewriting it for the next audience.

CHAPTER 03 · THE PROOF

IT ALREADY WORKS AT THE DESK. THE TABLE NEVER TRIED IT.

Give someone what they need up front instead of making them hunt for it, and they get faster. That isn't our claim. It's what controlled studies found when they split people into groups with and without AI and measured the actual work.

EXHIBIT 05 **When people get the information up front, measured work gets faster.** MARKET



Each bar is the measured gain, in percent, for the group using AI against the group without it, in that study's own terms. The BCG study also found a limit worth knowing: on a task outside what AI does well, consultants using it got the right answer less often, which is why a person still signs.



UPSTAIRS, THE SAME WEEK

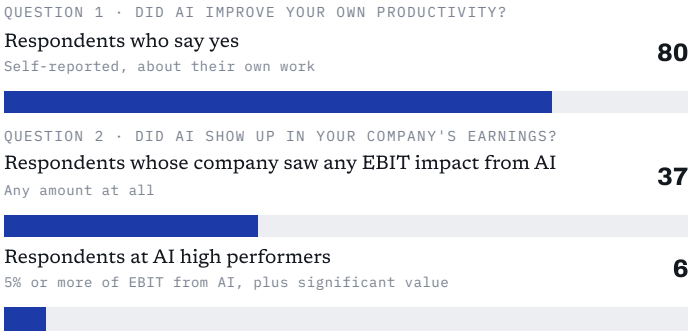
The room that demanded AI everywhere. One executive in six uses it on a decision. The calendar has not moved since 1964.

The people who asked for it haven't used it.

Leaders spent two years asking every team to adopt AI, and three in four knowledge workers now use it at work. Yet only about one executive in six uses it in strategic decisions, according to Capgemini's 2026 survey of 500 of them. The table that demanded it is the one table still running on slides.

That's why the gains don't show up in earnings. Eighty percent of the people McKinsey surveyed say AI made them personally more productive, but only 6 percent work at companies earning 5 percent or more of their profit from it. The speed is real, it just runs into a room that still decides the old way.

EXHIBIT 06 **People say AI made them faster. Very few companies can find it in their earnings.** MARKET

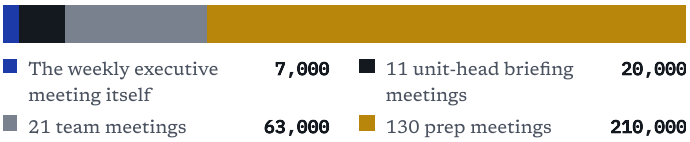


These aren't a funnel. All three bars come from the same 1,719 people in McKinsey's State of AI 2026, but they answer two different questions, one about their own work and one about their company's earnings.

The room was slow before AI showed up.

This isn't new. Bain found in 2006 that only about 15 percent of the 365 companies it studied made and carried out decisions well. In 2014, Mankins, Brahm and Caimi traced everything one weekly executive meeting at one large company set in motion over a year. It added up to 300,000 hours of people's time, and the meeting itself was 7,000 of them.

EXHIBIT 07 **Of 300,000 hours a year behind one weekly executive meeting, 7,000 are the meeting.** MARKET



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

Slide work isn't even counted. If the whole pile were 100 hours, the meeting itself would get about two.

Each square is 1,000 hours of people's time in one year. Mankins, Brahm and Caimi, Harvard Business Review, 2014. The study is old, but the way that pile gets built hasn't changed.

The same AI that already makes each person faster runs the rooms before the meeting, so every executive starts from their own page instead of a blank one.

CHAPTER 04 · THE MATH

WHAT IT COSTS, AND WHAT YOU GET BACK.

You're already paying for it.

The meeting isn't the hour on the calendar. The heaviest calendars get interrupted every two minutes during core hours, and PowerPoint edits jump 122 percent in the last ten minutes before a meeting (Microsoft, 2025). The managers staging all of it are down to 22 percent engaged worldwide (Gallup, 2026). Meanwhile 81 percent of organizations in McKinsey's 2026 survey of more than 10,000 executives report no real bottom-line gain from AI.

Where the 250 hours come from.

Counted out for East-West, meeting by meeting, the old way looks like this, and it's deliberately on the low side.

EXHIBIT 08 **250 hours the old way, 34 in the file, counted line by line.** OUR MATH

WHERE THE TIME GOES ON ONE EAST-WEST DECISION	HOURS
THE OLD WAY	
Three executive meetings, 8 people, 90 minutes each	36
Pre-reads and side conversations, 8 executives	24
Slides and prep meetings, 4 teams of 3 people, 10 hours each	120
Catch-up meetings after the vote, 10 people, two rounds	30
Rework once Legal and HR weigh in, 4 people	40
Total, the old way	**250**
IN THE FILE	
Seat owners check their data and the run, 6 people, 2 hours each	12
Writing the question so one person can sign it	1
First run only: building the rooms and the seats	3
Spot-checking the engine's sources, 2 people, 1 hour each	2
Allowance for one send-back and a second pass	3
A person reviews the file before it goes out	3
Eight executives read their own page, 30 minutes each	4
One 45-minute signing meeting, 8 people	6
Total, in the file	**34**

Checked against the market. Mankins' study found about 40 hours of prep for every hour in that executive meeting. This count uses fewer than 6 to 1, so the real old-way number is likely higher. The engine side now carries its own overhead too: writing the question, the first-run setup, checking sources and an allowance for one send-back.

What one decision costs you now.

East-West gives back 216 hours on one decision, and the count above is ours, not yours. Pick your company size and see your own: pay comes straight from Bureau of Labor Statistics data, and every line of the math is one click away inside the calculator.

The calculator is interactive, so it is not printed. Run it at articles.erichathaway.com/weve-done-it-backwards/calculator, where every line of the math is on the page.

The argument survives a worse count.

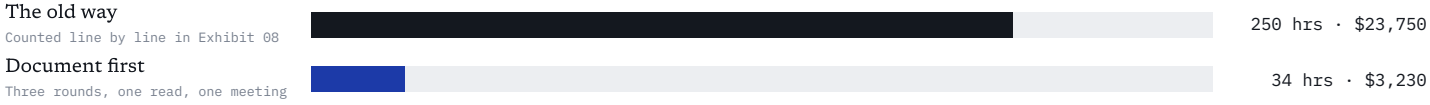
Even if the old way took only 100 hours and the file took 50, the file would still cut the time in half and turn ten weeks into two. The case does not rest on the exact hours. It rests on the order.

$23,750 the old way. $3,230 in the file.

Put public pay rates on those hours. Bureau of Labor Statistics data puts an operations manager at about $75 an hour with benefits and a financial manager at about $119, so we use $95 for the East-West seats, rounded down from the $97 midpoint to keep every figure a floor. Equity and bonuses aren't in it, which is why real numbers sit above ours.

EXHIBIT 09 **One decision: $23,750 the old way, $3,230 in the file.**

OUR MATH



$49

Loaded hour across all civilian jobs, for scale only. BLS ECEC, all civilian workers, March 2026

$75

Operations manager, loaded. $105,770 median wage, BLS OEWS May 2025, × 1.481

$119

Financial manager, loaded. $166,570 median wage, BLS OEWS May 2025, × 1.481

$95

Blend used for East-West seats. The midpoint of $75 and $119 is $97; we round down to $95 so the figure stays a floor

A second check. Saving eight people five 45-minute meetings a week for 48 weeks comes to 1,440 hours, about $137k at the same rate. That's not a trial or a real company's result.

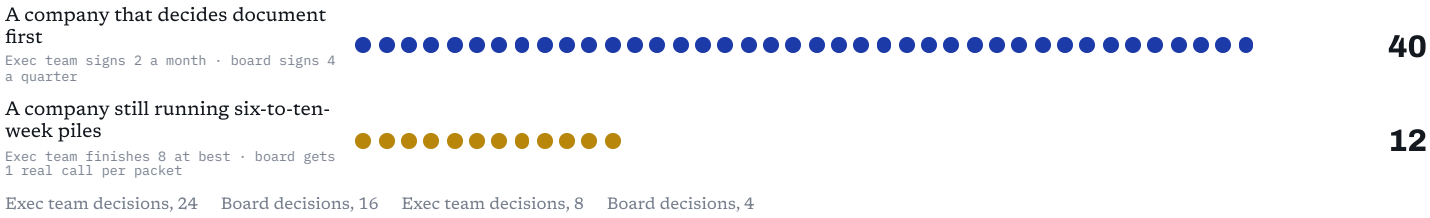
40 signed decisions a year instead of 12.

One decision is nice, but a year of them is the point. With the executive team signing twice a month and the board four times a quarter, the same calendar holds about 40 signed decisions instead of the 12 the old way manages in a good year. Twelve decisions at 250 hours is about 3,000 hours. Forty at 34 is about 1,360, under half of it.

But the point isn't the hours you save, it's what they open up. The teams that spent weeks building slides now have three times as many signed decisions to work on, so the whole pipe finally runs. That's the premise this paper started with. Take the blocker out of the room at the top, and all the AI speed already sitting at the desk finally has somewhere to go, and it starts to build on itself across the company.

EXHIBIT 10 **Same calendar: 40 signed decisions a year against 12.**

OUR MATH



Each dot is one signed decision. It's an example year built from the counts in Exhibit 08, not a trial. Plenty of companies never reach eight finished decisions a year, because they get the slide pile instead.

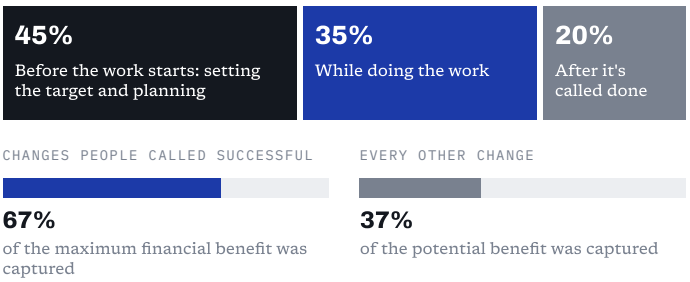
At enterprise size the pile around one weekly executive meeting costs about $22.5 million a year at the same rates, which is 300,000 hours at $75. That's the size of the bill, not the savings, but even a four-week slice of it is $1.7 million.

Nearly half the lost value is gone before the work starts.

Deciding faster matters most at the front. McKinsey's survey of 1,034 people who'd been through a big company change found that nearly half the value that gets lost disappears while the company is still arguing about the target, before any work begins.

EXHIBIT 11 **Nearly half the lost value is gone before the work starts.**

MARKET



McKinsey's 2021 survey of 1,034 people who'd been through a big company change reports that 55 percent of the lost value goes missing during and after the work, 20 percent of it after. The 45 and 35 percent pieces follow from those figures. Every number here is a share of the value that gets lost, not of total value.

EXHIBIT 12 **What the CEO gets back, on one decision and across a year.** OUR MATH

WHAT MOVES	THE OLD WAY	IN THE FILE	WHAT COMES BACK
	ONE DECISION		
Weeks to a signature	10	2	8 weeks
Executive meetings before anyone signs	3	1	2 meetings
Staff hours on the decision	250	34	216 hours
Cost of the decision, at $95 an hour	$23,750	$3,230	$20,520
Your own hours in it	7.5	1.25	6.25 hours
	A YEAR OF THEM		
Decisions that actually get signed	12	40	28 more
Staff hours spent deciding	3,000	1,360	1,640 hours
Your own hours in decision meetings	90	50	40 hours
Signed work the teams can start on	**12**	**40**	**3.3×**

Every line comes out of Exhibit 08. Your own hours are the executive lines of that count: three meetings at ninety minutes plus an hour of pre-read each, against reading one page and sitting one forty-five-minute signing meeting. The year assumes twelve signed decisions the old way and forty in the file. This is arithmetic on a made-up company at public pay rates, not a result any firm has reported. The honest headline is the one the paper opened with: you spend forty fewer hours a year on deciding and sign twenty-eight more decisions.

Lose in public, not in the meeting.

Today the miss is inside the building: nobody owned the answer, the wait times stayed where they were and a customer left while everyone was still in slides. Decide first and whatever miss is left belongs to the market, where you combined the offices and service still slipped, or the customer just said no. That company lost in public and can learn from it, while the other one never decided at all.

CHAPTER 05 · START

WHERE TO START.

Size changes where you start.

At twenty people the founder is the room, the board and the only memory of why the last call went the way it did, so the file becomes the company's memory. At two hundred to two thousand, start with the executive team, where the pile is heaviest and the hours come back first. Past five thousand, don't try to flip the whole enterprise at once, flip the questions a unit or a region truly owns.

Pick one question that's already on a calendar.

Choose one that would otherwise take three meetings to settle, not the snack vendor or anything you could decide in a hallway.

Write it as one sentence a person can sign.

"Do we combine East and West support?" works because someone can put their name under yes or no, and "support strategy" never allows that.

Pick the rooms, and who's in them.

Start with the executive team, then add the board, an innovation team or an investor forum if the question needs them, and build the ones you don't have. Put Legal and HR in from the start instead of briefing them after the vote.

Run it through the engine.

Three rounds in every room, dissent forced when a room agrees too fast, and fourteen facilitators checking every step. A day later every executive has their own page.

Walk into meeting one knowing the room.

Sign it or send it back, pointing at the page. Then count the hours you didn't spend, and hand the weeks you saved to the people who do the work.

BACK MATTER

CLAIMS, SOURCES AND METHOD.

What this paper claims, and what it doesn't.

We don't have a named company that ran this and reported the result, and we're not pretending to. The claim is narrower: the market has already measured that people and teams with the information up front work faster, and the executive table is the one place that hasn't been tried. East-West is a made-up company, our math is a floor built on public pay rates, and Level9 sells software that runs this method, which is why every number here is labeled with where it came from.

It isn't real.

You pick who fills each seat, the actual owner or whoever knows that job best, so the room is built for the question, which is the opposite of a costume.

People won't trust it.

They shouldn't on faith. The page goes out before the meeting with everything visible, who filed what, what got cut and the option that lost, and trust comes from reading it early enough to push back.

It costs too much.

The first run costs less than scheduling the meeting you'd use to evaluate it, and if the page is wrong, you send it back and make the call yourself.

It's more tech debt.

You keep your tools and agents. The page sits above them, and after the signature they work from a signed answer instead of a hallway conversation.

The paper, in four sentences

Write the question. Let the teams argue. Sign the page. Let the weeks be work.

AI is good at exactly what a decision needs: holding every fact, keeping the options that lost and remembering what finance argued last time. We had the engine, and we used it to write email.

I've sat in both chairs. We assumed faster tools at the bottom of the company would fix the room at the top, and they didn't, so flip the order and give the table the same head start everyone else already has.

Where Level9 fits.

Everything in this paper works with people, a shared document and a calendar, and it's worth running your first one that way so you know what good looks like before any software touches it. Level9 builds StratOS to run this same method: rooms of up to ten seats that bring their own data, independent agents across multiple models, three rounds with drift detection and dissent forced, fourteen facilitators checking every step, and a page for every executive before the meeting.

It works alongside the agents and tools you already have, so you can use as much or as little of it as you want. You can find it at level9os.com .

Want to send this to someone, or mark it up? Download the PDF , a 13-page two-column edition with every source linked, and all three executive pages in the appendix. There is also a 13-slide deck and its PDF .

Eight voices, the East-West meeting acted out. Not a reading of the paper.

Two columns, every exhibit, every source linked, and the three executive pages in the appendix.

The argument in thirteen slides, for the meeting where you only get ten minutes.

How to read the numbers

Market numbers come from a named study or survey, cited where they appear.

Our math numbers are our own arithmetic: the hours from the line-by-line count in Exhibit 08, priced at Bureau of Labor Statistics pay rates with benefits (median wage × 1.481, the BLS ECEC ratio of total compensation to wages for management, business and financial occupations, divided by 2,080 hours a year). Treat them as a floor, not a return any real company has earned. Equity and bonuses aren't included.

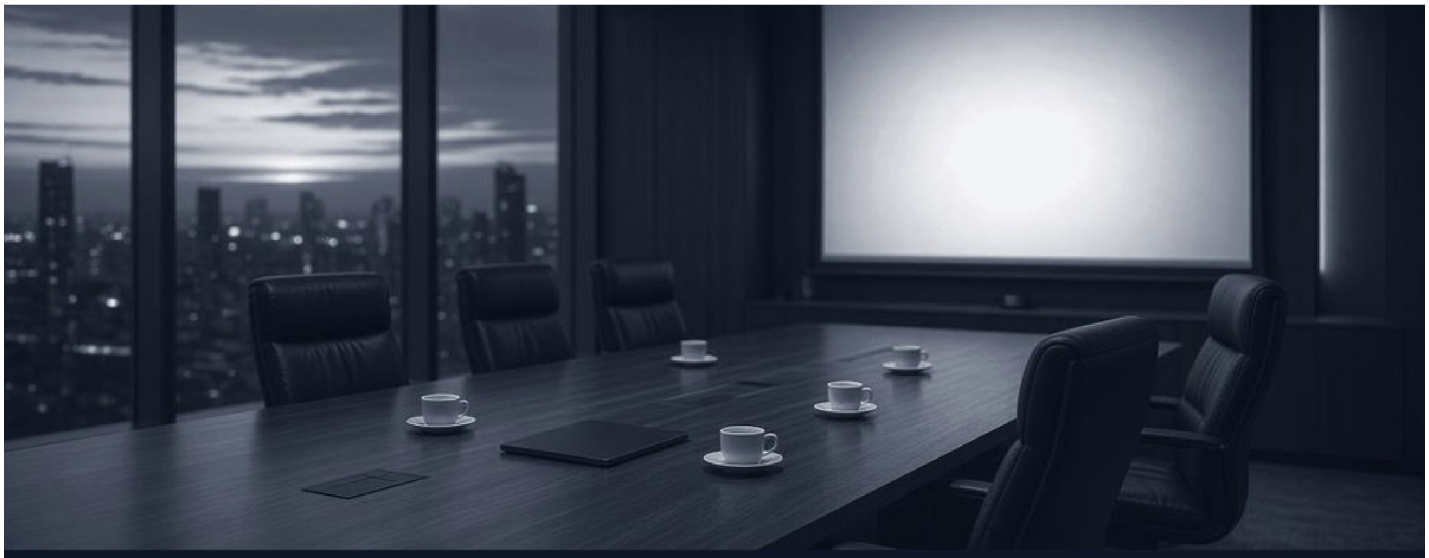
Example material, including the East-West company and its decision file, is made up from meetings every operator will recognize, and the photos are illustrations, not a real firm.

Words this paper uses

Sources

APPENDIX

THE THREE EXECUTIVE PAGES, IN FULL.



THURSDAY, 9 A.M.

The room the file walks into. Every seat has read its own page before anyone sits down.

A day after the question went in, each of these was on a different desk. Same decision, same facts, three different jobs to do in the room. They are reproduced here as the reader receives them.

APPENDIX A

The CEO · Two no votes, and both are about how you do it. Nobody's against doing it.

WHO'S AT THE TABLE

What each seat argued in the room, what would move them, and the number they need to bring. The amber card is the pushback that came in after the file went out.

COO
Brought the question · signs

SIGNS

"I want this signed Thursday or sent back with a page number."

Keep the room on the one question. Every side topic pushes the signature to another meeting.

CFO
Finance seat

FOR

"It pays back in about seven months if we're out of the West lease in year one."

They're already in. Watch that they don't sell the seven months as a sure thing. It depends on the lease.

VP Operations
Operations seat

AGAINST

"One queue fails as one queue, and we've never tested a failover."

A failover test that passes before cutover. The room already made that the gate. They lost the vote and won the condition.

CHRO
HR seat

AGAINST AS SEQUENCED

"Fourteen people hear it from us before any announcement, or I'm a no."

Put the role conversations first in the plan. It costs about two weeks. It's the easiest yes you'll give all meeting.

West support lead
Joins for this item

FOR

"We can't hire our way out of an eleven minute hold."

Speed. They'll push for the earliest cutover date. That's where they'll clash with Operations.

East support lead
Joins for this item

CONDITIONAL

"We'll take West's peaks once my people are cross-trained."

A training plan with real hours in it. Say the cross-training is funded and they're a yes.

General Counsel
Legal seat

NO BLOCK

"Two notice obligations. Neither one stops the call."

Nothing needed. They're the one who can settle the CFO's lease question, so ask them first.

NUMBERS THAT HAVE TO BE IN THE ROOM

If one of these is missing Thursday, the meeting turns into a second meeting. Two aren't ready yet.

THE NUMBER	WHO BRINGS IT	WHO'LL ASK FOR IT	STATUS
Failover test date, and what passing means	VP Operations	You, CFO, West lead	Missing
Contact volume, the file's number against marketing's	CMO	CFO, East lead	Due tomorrow
Can we break the West lease in year one, and what it costs	General Counsel	CFO	Coming
Cross-training hours per East agent	East lead	VP Operations, CHRO	Draft
Hold times by hour, last 90 days	West lead	Everyone	In the file
The 14 roles and the conversation order	CHRO	General Counsel	In the file
Savings, one-time cost and payback	CFO	You	In the file

THE MONEY

The CFO's case is right on its own terms. It just assumes nothing slips.

Counted from the day of the switch.

Nobody has put these two together. Each problem alone still pays back inside about a year and a half. Both at once push it to almost two years. That's the question to ask the CFO.

WHERE THE ARGUMENTS WILL BE

Three fault lines. You can settle all three in the room if you know them going in.

West holds keep climbing, so the West lead will push for a date. Settle it by tying the cutover to the test result and leaving the calendar out of it. Ask Operations for the test date and let the cutover follow.

HR's no is about order. Move the 14 conversations ahead of any announcement. It adds about two weeks and turns an against into a yes.

If marketing is right, you need about 3 more agents. That changes the staffing plan. It doesn't change whether to combine. Say that out loud so the 8 percent doesn't sink the whole call.

THREE QUESTIONS ONLY YOU SHOULD ASK

To VP Operations

"What date can you show me failover working?"

If there's no date, the plan has no gate. Don't sign without one.

To the CFO

BEFORE THURSDAY

Four short notes that fill the gaps before anyone sits down. Copy and send.

To VP Operations

Bring a date for the failover test on Thursday. It's the gate for the whole plan.

To General Counsel

Can you get the landlord's position on breaking the West lease before Thursday?

IF IT'S A YES, WHO DOES WHAT

Every job has an owner and a date before anyone leaves the room.

Day 1 to 14

Talk to all 14 people whose jobs change

CHRO

Day 30

APPENDIX B

The COO · You're signing for one team. Before Thursday, decide who runs it.

THE QUESTION NOBODY'S ASKED OUT LOUD

The plan removes one management layer, and all 14 roles that change are on the West side. Both support leads can do that math.

West support lead
Voted for it

FOR

They voted for a plan that may change their own job, and they haven't asked about it.

East support lead
Conditional

CONDITIONAL

They're about to absorb West's peaks, and either run the bigger team or report to someone who does.

FOUR DEALS TO CLOSE BEFORE THURSDAY

Each one sits between two teams. Close them before the meeting and the meeting only has to sign.

The failover and phone work sits in Operations' budget, and none of the savings come back to them. That's part of why they voted no.

The deal: move the $110k into the program budget, next to the lease savings.

West wants it fast because holds keep climbing. Operations wants proof first. Both are right.

The deal: the failover test sets the cutover date. Give West relief sooner. From day 30, East takes West's peak-hour overflow once the first group is trained.

WHO PAYS, WHO SAVES

The same $640k and $395k as everyone's page, split by the team that feels it.

TEAM	PAYS ONCE	SAVES A YEAR	WHAT THEY'LL FEEL
Facilities, under the CFO	$150k lease break	$380k lease	The big winner
Support, yours	$135k cross-training	$260k management layer	Drops to $70k if the CMO is right
Operations	$110k failover and phones	$0	Pays for a plan it voted against
HR	Time for 14 conversations	$0	Carries the hardest two weeks
Everyone	$395k	$640k, or $450k	Pays back in about 7 months, or 21 if two things slip

RISKS YOU OWN

Each one has an early warning, so you see it coming before it's a reopen.

RISK	EARLY WARNING	OWNER	WHAT YOU DO
The failover test fails	The test date slips past day 60	VP Operations	Hold the cutover. This one reopens the decision.
West holds get worse during the switch	Over 13 minutes three days running	West lead	Pause the cutover and add East overflow hours.
East holds rise while training runs	Over 6 minutes on any day	East lead	Slow the training waves.
Top West agents leave when the news breaks	2 resignations in the first 30 days	CHRO	Retention offers to the top five by day 14.
The lease exit slips past year one	No landlord answer by day 30	General Counsel	Tell the CFO. Payback moves to about 15 months.
The CMO's 8 percent holds	The volume check confirms it	CMO	Hire 3 by day 60. Payback moves to about 11 months.

WHAT THE CEO WILL ASK YOU

The CEO's page tells them to ask three questions. Two of them come to you.

To VP Operations, and then to you

"What date can you show me failover working?"

Have the date, or the day you'll have it. Without one the plan has no gate.

WHERE EVERY SEAT STANDS

The full seat-by-seat view is on the CEO's page. This is the short version.

BEFORE THURSDAY

Five short notes. Most of the meeting happens here.

To the West support lead

Can we grab 20 minutes before Thursday? I want to talk about your role in the combined team.

To the CFO

Can the $110k failover and phone work sit in the program budget, next to the lease savings?

YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS

One review a week, 15 minutes, three numbers: West hold time, East hold time, and where the failover test stands.

Day 1 to 14

Name the leader. Talk to all 14 people.

You · CHRO

Day 30

APPENDIX C

The CFO · Your seven months is right. It rests on two things nobody has confirmed.

THE TWO NUMBERS YOUR CASE RESTS ON

Each one alone still pays back inside about a year and a half. Together they take it to almost two years.

Seven months needs the $380k lease saving from the first year. The break clause is in the lease, but nobody has called the landlord.

If it slips a year: payback moves to about 15 months.

The CMO says contacts run 8 percent higher than the file. If so, the combined team needs about 3 more agents, $190k a year.

If the CMO is right: savings drop to $450k and payback moves to about 11 months.

WHEN THE CASH COMES BACK

Cumulative cash from today. Everything is spent by the switch at day 90, so that's the low point.

WHO PAYS, WHO SAVES

The savings land in your Facilities line. The costs land in Support and Operations.

TEAM	PAYS ONCE	SAVES A YEAR	WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU
Facilities, yours	$150k lease break	$380k lease	Most of the upside lands here
Support	$135k cross-training	$260k management layer	Only $70k left if the CMO is right
Operations	$110k failover and phones	$0	The COO will ask you to move this
Everyone	$395k	$640k, or $450k	About 7 months, or 21 if both slip

WHAT YOU'LL BE ASKED

THE NUMBER	STATUS
Payback under all four cases	Ready
Cash low point, $395k at day 90	Ready
Cost of 3 more agents, $190k a year	Ready
What breaking the lease really costs	Coming from Legal
The CMO's volume check	Due tomorrow

RISKS TO THE NUMBERS

What would move your case, and what you'd see first.

RISK	YOU'D SEE IT FIRST AS	WHAT IT DOES TO THE CASE
The lease exit slips	No landlord answer by day 30	Payback to about 15 months
The CMO's volume holds	The check confirms 8 percent	$190k a year more, payback about 11 months
Training backfill runs over	Overtime past plan by day 45	Eats into the $135k, then into savings
The failover test fails and needs rework	The test date slips past day 60	More one-time cost, and the switch moves out
West agents leave early	2 resignations in 30 days	Hiring and overtime before the savings start

BEFORE THURSDAY

Three notes that turn your two assumptions into facts.

To General Counsel

Can you get the landlord's answer on the West lease break before Thursday? My payback depends on it.

To the CMO

Send me your volume numbers before Thursday so I can re-run the case, even if they're rough.