



OBEYA
association

DECISION LEADERSHIP: HOW HUMAN-CENTRED CLARITY DRIVES PERFORMANCE IN COMPLEX ORGANISATIONS



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THE NEXT FRONTIER OF PERFORMANCE IS NOT FASTER TASK DELIVERY, BUT STRUCTURED DECISION LEADERSHIP

Performance is determined not by how much work is done, but by how clearly decisions are made

According to DDI (2025), only 40% of leaders are confident in their organisation's decision-making capability, despite over 70% rating execution as effective. Korn Ferry (2025) further highlights that while 41% of organisations have reduced management layers, 43% report leadership misalignment and 37% of employees feel directionless.

This reveals a structural gap: execution has improved, but decision clarity has not.

Obeya is often implemented to improve visibility and alignment, yet in many organisations it remains a reporting mechanism rather than a decision system.

This talk addresses that gap by showing how Obeya, when intentionally designed, shifts from tracking activity to structuring decisions by making ownership explicit, trade-offs visible, and accountability unavoidable.

The result is not improved coordination alone, but a practical decision governance system that enables organisations to operate with clarity under complexity, pressure, and rapid change.



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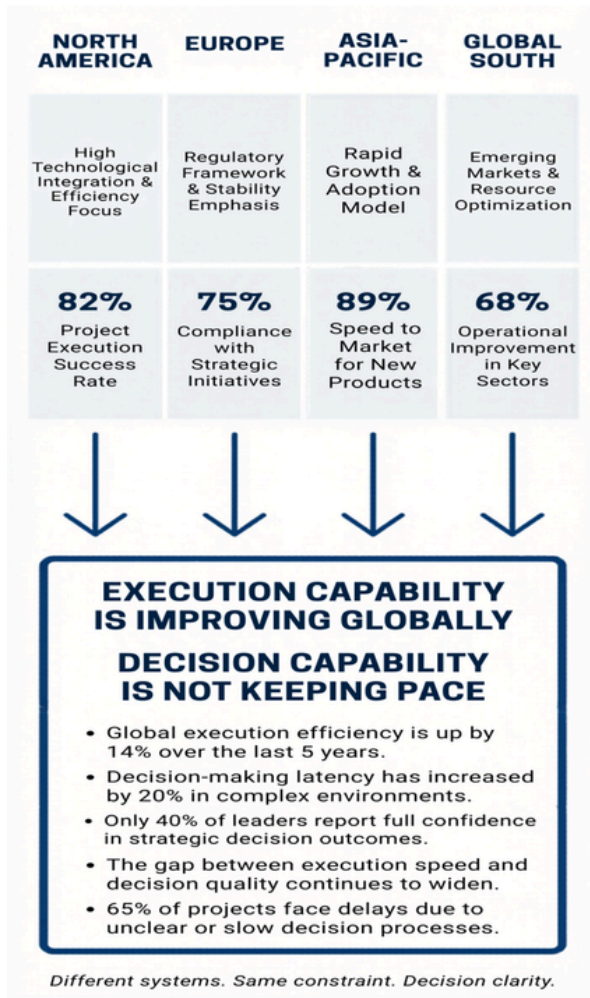
Precious operates at the intersection of business analysis, decision leadership, and AI governance, helping organisations move from execution to strategic impact.

Her work across complex transformation programmes consistently addresses a core challenge: strong delivery structures with weak decision clarity.

She focuses on repositioning Obeya as a decision system that improves alignment, reduces ambiguity, and strengthens judgement in complex environments.

This article reflects that work in practice, demonstrating how structured decision leadership enhances organisational resilience, accelerates outcomes, and enables more effective collaboration across functions and stakeholders.

THE DECISION GAP



- 85% of business leaders regret or question decisions they have made.
- 72% say the volume of data has stopped them from making any decision at all."
- 57% of organisations operate at low decision maturity."

Across all four contexts, execution capability is clearly improving, and the numbers reflect that. What is less visible, but consistently felt, is the strain on decision-making. Execution is moving faster. Decisions are not keeping pace.

Globally Different systems. Same constraint.



14% of execution efficiency has increased by over the past five years.



40% of leaders report confidence in strategic decision outcomes.



20% of decision-making latency has increased by in complex environments.



65% of projects experience delays due to slow or unclear decisions.

WHAT STRUCTURED DECISION LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

Element	Defining question	Implications
Risk profile	• Potential consequences and reversibility	• Higher risk: Greater diligence and consultation
Frequency	• Often made or one-off	• Frequent: Opportunities to experiment or automate • One-off: Bespoke analysis and explicit leadership calls
Urgency vs. importance	• Time sensitivity vs. strategic value	• Route as: Do now, schedule, delegate, or ignore
Time horizon	• Timing of consequences	• Align KPIs, funding, and risk to the time horizon: win now vs. build for the future
Certainty/risk/uncertainty	• Knowns vs. predictable unknowns vs. true unknowns	• Knowns/quantifiable: Model risk • Uncertain: Use adaptive playbooks
Level of chaos (Cynefin) ²	• Obvious connection between cause and effect	If the environment is ... • Clear: Use best practice • Complicated: Use expert analysis • Complex: Probe-sense-respond • Chaotic: Act to stabilize
Option-creating vs. commitment	• Expands or constrains future choices	• Expands: Treat like experiments • Commits: Treat like capital investments
Guardrail-critical vs. value-seeking	• Degree of sensitivity, regulation, or special requirements for decision makers (i.e., certifications)	• Guardrails: Use rules and audits • Value-seeking: Use creative risk-return calculus



Amazon: decision velocity through classification

- Amazon distinguishes between two types of decisions:
- One-way doors- irreversible decisions that require deeper scrutiny.
- Two-way doors -reversible decisions that should be made quickly.



In practice

This separation reduces unnecessary escalation and protects decision speed.



Within an Obeya environment:

- high-impact decisions are made visible, escalated, and governed.
- reversible decisions are managed closer to the work.
- This avoids escalation overload while maintaining control where it matters.

URGENCY & RATIONALE

Hidden Risks Undermining Decision Performance

- **Decision fatigue & overload:** 72% of leaders say data volume prevents effective decision-making (Oracle, 2025)
- **Fragmented ownership:** 43% of employees say leadership is not aligned (Korn Ferry, 2025)
- **Over-reliance on task delivery:** 70% of organisations rate execution highly, but only 40% trust decision-making (DDI, 2025).
- **Cultural misalignment in decision authority:** 41% of organisations have reduced management layers, increasing ambiguity (Korn Ferry, 2025).
- **Leadership pipeline stagnation:** 60% lack confidence in future leadership capability (DDI, 2025)

Hidden Risks: Why Decision Performance Breaks Down



72%

Decision fatigue & overload

Data volume prevents effective decision-making



43%

Fragmented ownership

Leaders are not aligned across the organisation



40% vs 70%

Decision vs execution gap

Execution is strong, decision confidence is low



41%

Cultural misalignment

Fewer management layers increase ambiguity



60%

Leadership pipeline risk

Organisations lack confidence in future leaders

Decision Rigor and Integrity

Most organizations still treat decisions as by-products of meetings and dashboards rather than worthy of explicit design and focus. To add rigor and integrity, consider the following:

Surface the Decisions That Matter:

- Identify critical decisions early
- Clarise decision ownership and inputs
- Make decision structures explicit in workflows
- Design environments that enable better decisions (choice architecture)

Strengthen Decision Basis & Culture:

- Define clear, fit-for-decision evidence
- Align data and hypotheses before decisions
- Prioritise evidence over hierarchy
- Build a culture of candour and decision quality

HOW ORGANISATIONS ARE DOING IT

IBM: governance through structured oversight

IBM uses dedicated ethics boards to review high-impact AI decisions, guided by:

- Trust principles.
- Transparency requirements.
- Clear accountability structures.

This ensures that critical decisions are not only technically sound but also governed.

Within Obeya, this can be reflected through:
Defined escalation layers for high-impact decisions.
Clear governance pathways for review and ownership.

DBS Bank: decision quality as a filter

DBS evaluates AI-influenced decisions against four principles:

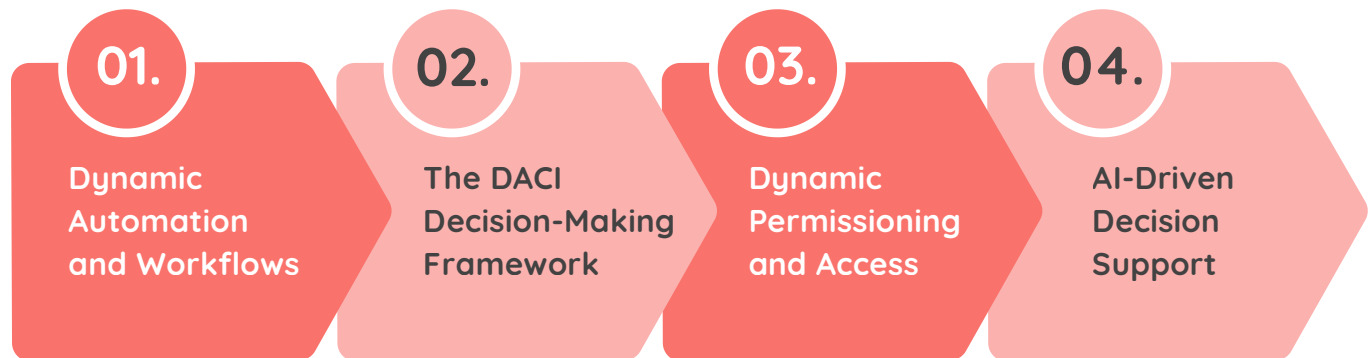
- Purposeful
- Unsurprising
- Respectful
- Explainable

This creates a practical filter for assessing decision quality.

Within Obeya, these principles can be embedded directly into decision criteria, shaping how decisions are reviewed and challenged.

Workers who trust the AI systems they interact with are significantly more likely to see them as critical to value creation.

Here is how Atlassian supports dynamic decision rights:



Peer Evidence

Visibility alone does not resolve decision bottlenecks. In a UK Civil Service digital infrastructure programme, Obeya sessions provided clear delivery tracking, yet strategic decisions continued to circulate without closure.

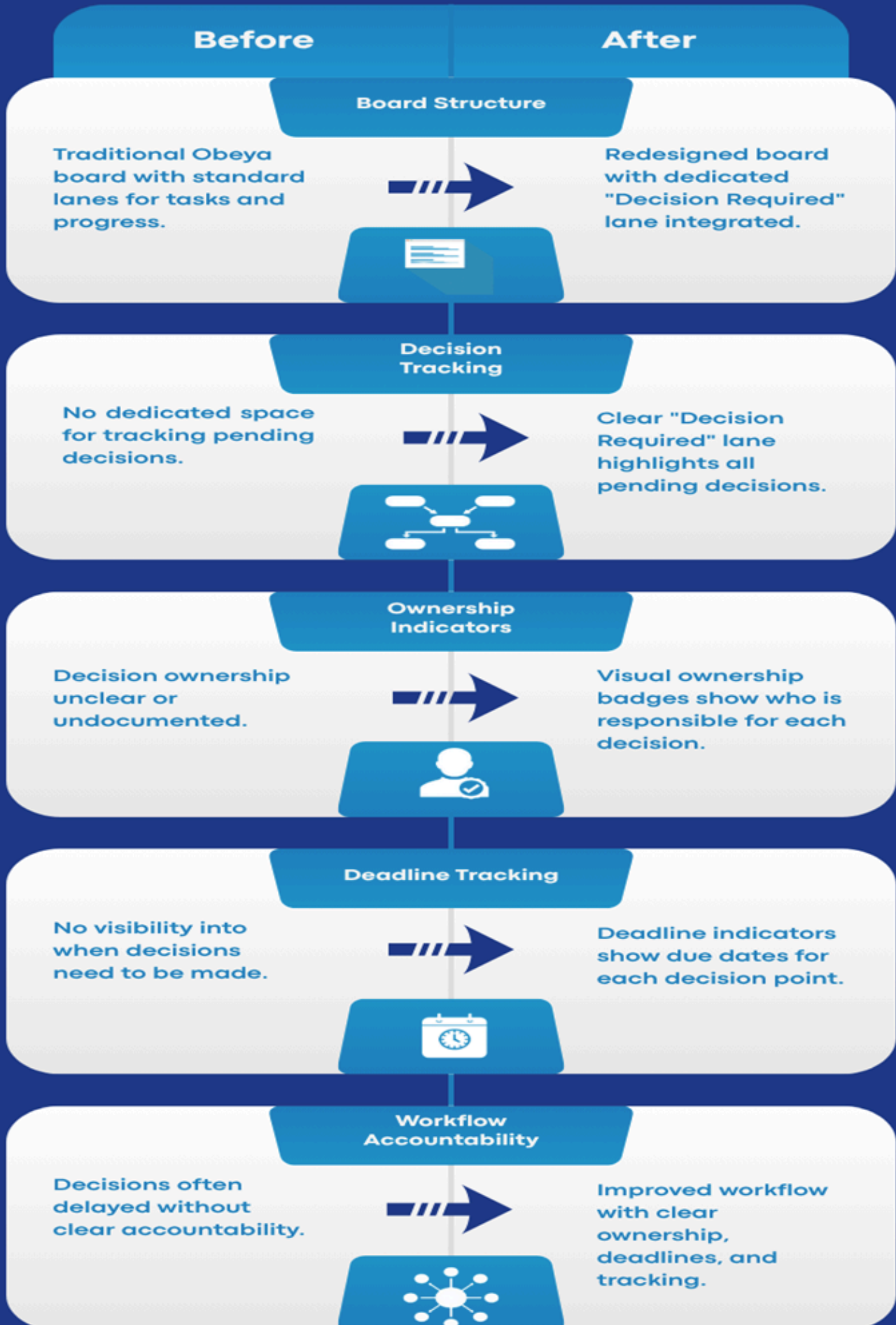
Escalations were visible. Ownership was not.

The shift came when decision structure was introduced.

Within three cycles, decision latency reduced and re-escalation declined.

Obeya became effective not because it visualised work, but because it structured decisions. In this form, it operates as a governance system rather than a coordination tool.

LAYOUT, STRUCTURE & ARCHITECTURE



WHAT CHANGES WHEN IT WORKS



Primary Impact

- 30% faster decisions
- 15% backlog reduction
- 50% less informal reporting

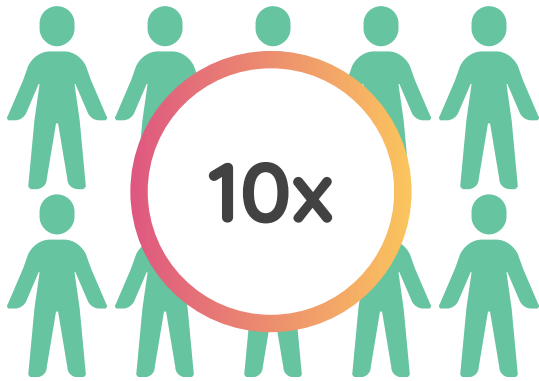
Operational Impact

- Fewer escalation cycles
- Faster cross-team alignment
- Reduced decision ambiguity

Strategic Impact

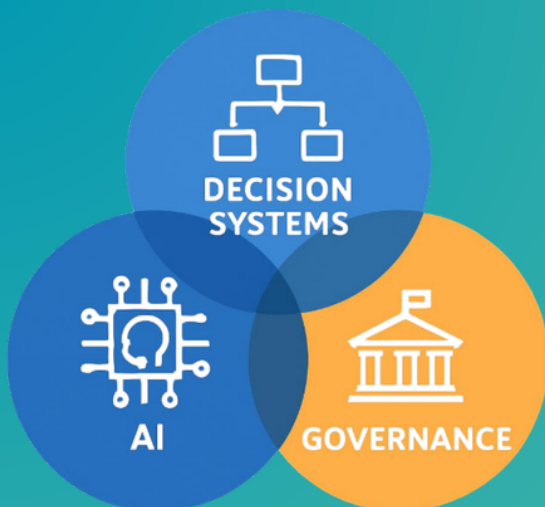
- Clear decision ownership
- Better prioritisation of investment
- Stronger link between data and action

OUTCOMES & VALUE (ROI)



Trust as a Driver of Value in AI-Enabled Decisions

- Deloitte’s Trustworthy AI research shows that workers who trust the AI agents they work with are 10 times more likely to see those agents as critical to creating value.
- People extend trust to technology when it consistently demonstrates reliability, capability, transparency, and humanity.
- Humans can confidently collaborate with AI and accept responsibility for the results when they know how the decision was made and how they materially influenced it.
- Trust rises when AI is used where people welcome it and is constrained where they don’t.



AI-AUGMENTED DECISION LEADERSHIP

AI should augment human judgement, not obscure accountability. Obeya environments can serve as governance anchors where AI outputs are contextualised, interrogated, and owned by accountable leaders.

Without structured decision systems, AI amplifies noise. With disciplined Obeya governance, AI enhances signal quality.

RISKS, THREATS & CONTINUITY

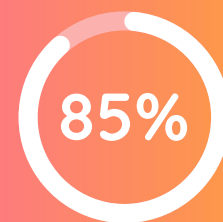
When organizations do not intentionally design for human agency, they risk:

- **Opaque Choices:** Relying on black-box algorithms where the logic behind decisions is unexplainable or invisible, making it difficult to understand the "why" behind critical business outcomes.
- **Diluted Accountability:** Breaking the link between action and author. This makes it difficult to determine who is responsible for AI-made decisions, often resulting in lower ownership over outcomes and increased "shadow AI" usage.
- **Slow Erosion of Human Agency:** A gradual, creeping loss of the ability for humans to effectively evaluate, contextually understand, and independently decide, often substituted by unverified AI outputs.

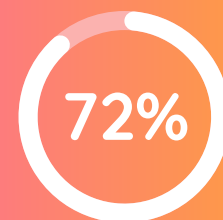
The Cost of Not Fixing This



Organisations operate at low decision maturity (Deloitte 2026)



Leaders regret or question decisions (Oracle 2025)



Say data volume prevents decisions (Oracle 2025)