

LEVERAGING LEAN FOR BETTER DECISION-MAKING

This article highlights the vital role effective decision-making plays in the oil and gas industry, emphasizing the need for both quality and agility in today's dynamic environment. It introduces the powerful combination of Lean and modern decision science as a solution to elevate decision-making capabilities, enabling navigation of the evolving landscape with agility and confidence.

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Rethinking Decision-Making in a Shifting Energy Landscape



The oil and gas landscape is cracking. Unpredictable markets, evolving regulations, and climate concerns have shattered familiar terrain. In this dynamic new reality, traditional decision-making frameworks crumble like shale under pressure. A recent Gartner survey underscores the complexity of modern decision-making, revealing that a staggering 65% of decisions made today are more intricate than ever before, demanding the consideration of diverse stakeholders and a wider range of choices.¹

A radical rethinking, powered by the adaptable principles of Lean and the data-driven insights of modern decision science (MDS), is the key to forging a prosperous future amid the powerful forces shaping the industry:

- *Technological disruption:* Innovations in data analytics, AI, and automation are transforming operations, risk management, and insights. However, they also bring corporate challenges related to data quality, security, and integration.



"The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence itself but to act with yesterday's logic." Peter Drucker, renowned management consultant²

- *Geopolitical realities:* From volatile markets to fluid regulations, companies must make swift, informed decisions that outpace market fluctuations, navigate regulatory shifts, and effectively manage emerging risks.

- *Workforce specialization:* Growing specialization of skills requires seamless collaboration and knowledge sharing. Mile-deep skillsets must be woven into a mile-wide system of comprehensive, high-quality decisions.
- *Sustainable imperative:* Increasing concerns about climate change, the demand for renewable energy, and stricter environmental regulations are driving the industry toward long-term sustainability initiatives and strategies for energy transition, forcing companies to recognize this inevitable future and adapt — before it's too late.

Decision-making: The Lifeline of Oil and Gas

Effective decision-making has always been the lifeblood of the oil and gas industry. But in today's dynamic landscape, quality alone is insufficient. Agility, the nimble dance between speed and accuracy, has become essential. Companies need both quality and agile decision-making to stay in front of market forces and transform — or risk falling behind:



Quality Decisions prioritize safety, the environment, and minimizing risks in key activities like exploration, drilling, and production.

Agile Decisions involve capitalizing on change, responding rapidly to uncertainty, optimizing performance in complex operations, embracing technological advancements, and building resilience to unforeseen challenges.



Executives must critically evaluate if their companies' traditional decision-making frameworks still hold relevance today. Mere longevity does not ensure effectiveness in the competitive, dynamic environment now being faced. Adopting new practices that emphasize both decision-making agility and quality are necessary to thrive in this era of transformation.

¹ "How to Make Better Business Decisions", Gartner, October 2021. <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/how-to-make-better-business-decisions>

² "Leadership Everywhere Means Reversed Leadership," Global Peter Drucker Forum, September 2020. <https://www.druckerforum.org/blog/leadership-everywhere-means-reversed-leadership-by-jane-mcconnell>



Slow Decision-Making vs. Agile Decision-Making

Slow Decision-Making: A Cautionary Tale of GE

General Electric (GE) paints a stark picture of the perils of sluggish decision-making. This once-diversified giant stumbled in energy markets and the digital economy, hampered by its tardiness in shedding underperforming businesses and restructuring operations. The outcome? Financial losses and a plummeting market value.

Agile Decision-Making: Zoom's Recipe for Success

Zoom Video Communications, on the other hand, shines as a beacon of agility. When the pandemic triggered a surge in remote communication, they quickly adapted, enhancing their platform and introducing innovative features. This responsiveness cemented their lead in the video-conferencing arena.

Decision-Making with Lean and Modern Decision Science



The synergy of Lean principles and MDS offers companies a blueprint for enhancing decision-making capabilities. This powerful pairing empowers everyone, from frontline teams to C-suites, to make swift, informed choices that conquer complexity and outsmart human biases. This isn't just about streamlined workflows; it's about building a culture where informed, agile decisions fuel continuous improvement and project success.

Lean is a globally recognized management approach for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. It emphasizes streamlined workflows, value creation, and problem-solving while maintaining flexibility. What is less understood about Lean is how its organizational principles align day-to-day decisions and actions across all levels of the company— from the C-suite to the frontline — with corporate objectives. Lean establishes a structure and culture that empowers all individuals to

actively participate in continuous improvement and innovation — placing people at the heart of value creation.

Lean principles transform an organization's decision-making capabilities in three critical ways:

- **Decision-flow management (DFM):** Applying Lean principles streamlines decision-making, minimizing delays and bottlenecks while boosting efficiency and quality.
- **Decentralized decision-making (DDM):** Lean empowers frontline teams to make informed and timely decisions regarding emerging problems and opportunities as they are identified, enhancing speed and accuracy.
- **Lean leadership:** Lean leaders champion new ways of working, foster trust and collaboration, and drive adoption of Lean principles throughout the organization.

But the journey goes beyond structure. MDS complements the Lean principles by shedding light on the intricate mechanics of how we, as humans and organizations, make choices. Think of MDS as the "why" behind the "how" of Lean.

MDS' rich history, dating back to the 17th century, draws from diverse disciplines like mathematics, psychology, economics, philosophy, and even incorporates modern advancements in neuroscience and ethical considerations for responsible decision-making. From military and management strategy to real-world project delivery, MDS offers actionable insights that focus on:

- **Decision quality:** The application of frameworks and models to build robust "decision architectures," empowering teams to make well-informed, well-framed choices.
- **Decision biases:** Tools to anticipate and mitigate natural biases, emotions, mental shortcuts, and hidden incentives, leading to sound decisions.

Decision-Flow Management: Optimizing Complex Choices with Lean

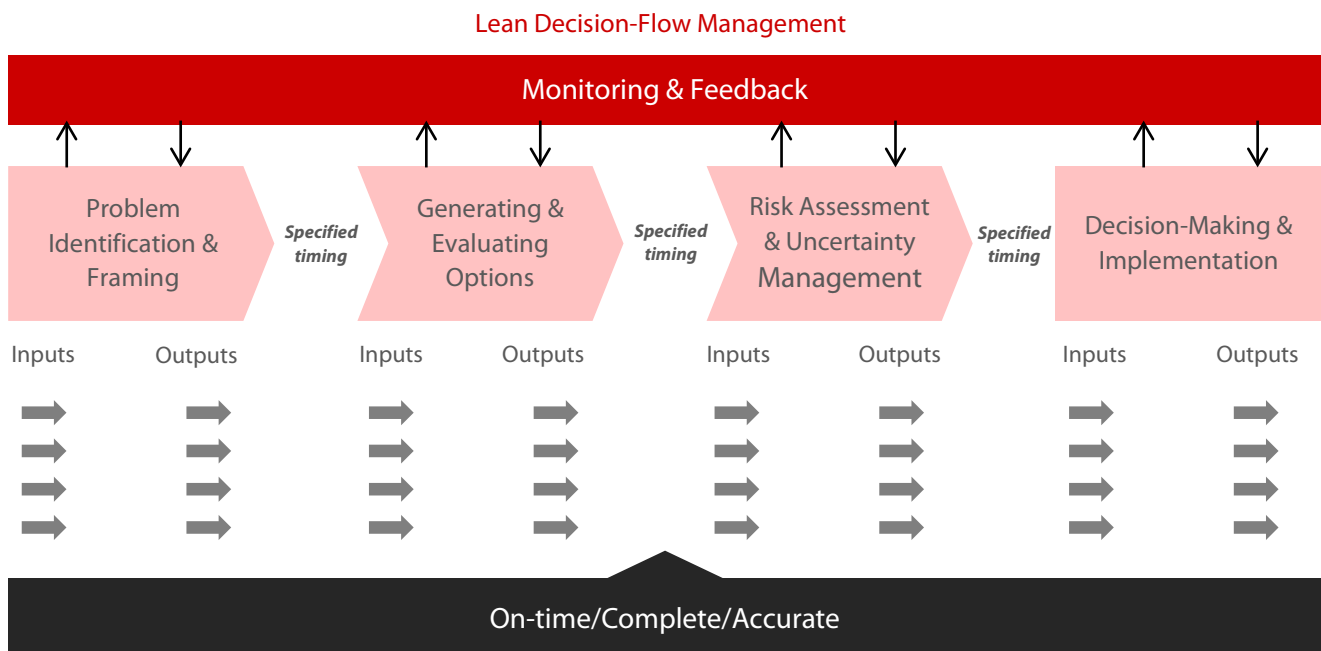
Complex decisions involving multiple teams, data analysis, and diverse perspectives can be slow, error-prone, and frustrating. Lean decision-flow management (DFM) tackles this challenge head-on, applying its

production-system principles to the "production" of decisions. Here's how:

1. *Define the ideal flow:* A clear roadmap is established for the decision-making process and information flow throughout an organization. Practices and standards are defined that minimize delays, bottlenecks, and unnecessary steps. Each decision made aligns with overall corporate objectives, ensuring everyone is rowing in the same direction.
2. *Build the execution structure:* A framework is established for efficient decision-execution, streamlining communication, clear accountability, and standardized activities. With an unquestionable decision-making foundation, management can focus all their energies on making high-quality decisions.
3. *Manage and continuously improve:* Improvement is a journey, not a destination. Through active monitoring, the decision-making process is constantly refined by identifying and eliminating the wastes of Lean (e.g., waiting, motion, correction).

"We simply analyze the timeline from beginning to end, and we reduce that timeline by removing the non-value-added wastes."

Taiichi Ohno, Lean architect³



³ Taiichi Ohno, *Toyota Production System: Beyond large-scale production*, (pp ix), CRC Press, 1988.

Lean DFM establishes shared goals and performance metrics. Routine monitoring of performance highlights missed timelines for information flow and decision points, which trigger action for improvement. This approach promotes transparency and accountability, building a culture of ownership across the organization.

Three Lean concepts — Rules in Use, the Obeya, and A3s/A3 Thinking — support DFM.

Rules in Use for Streamlined Flow

Rules in Use take the guesswork out of how decision-making should occur:

- *Simple and direct information and material flow:* Streamlined information and material flow is achieved through waste removal and clear connections, ensuring efficiency, preventing rework, and eliminating non-value-adding activities.
- *Standardized activities:* Consistent decision-flows minimize errors and surprises and increase efficiency.
- *Visible problems:* Transparency allows immediate identification and resolution of decision-flow issues.

The Obeya for Connection, Context, and Clarity



The Obeya, a “big room,” serves as a central hub for decision-making transparency, facilitating:

- *Cross-functional engagement:* Most processes in a company — and decisions related to them — cross many departments and functions. In the Obeya, teams gain a comprehensive understanding of interdependencies between decisions made by different groups.
- *Knowledge gap closure:* Collective prioritization ensures everyone is on the same page and immediately aware of knowledge gaps when they emerge. The critical information needed to close the gaps is readily available in the Obeya.
- *Streamlined approvals:* Open communication and alignment fostered by the Obeya enable faster decision-making.

- *Decision-flow status:* Kanban boards visually track decision-making progress, identify bottlenecks, and prioritize tasks based on impact and urgency.

A3 Thinking for Clarifying Uncertainty & Building Trust

When faced with unclear data or decision paths, A3s and A3 Thinking offer a single-page, story-driven framework. This framework presents factual information and proposals with clarity, thereby fostering shared understanding and consensus. Being standardized and concise, it eliminates the need for lengthy reviews, and builds trust in the decision-making process.

Lean Decision-Flow A3

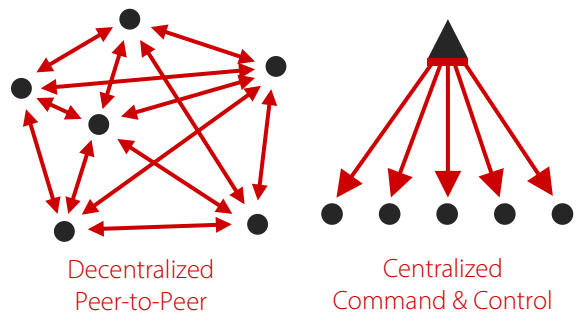
Critical Decision A3 Title:		Team Leader:	Team Members:	Date:
1. Problem / Opportunity Description & True Decision to be Made		5. Recommendation, Rationale, and Contingency		
Background:		Recommendation:		
Decision Statement:		Rationale:		
		Contingency Plan:		
2. Analysis and Trade Offs		6. Final Decision (include rationale if decision deviates from team recommendation)		
3. Evaluation of Options (include company goals & values in ranking criteria)		7. Implementation Plan		
		Activity Owner Support By When Status		
4. Assumptions Made & Givens Taken		8. Measure Decision Effectiveness		
		Metrics Current Target Change Metrics Current Target Change		
		9. Post-Decision Learnings		
		Decision Maker Sign-offs to Ensure Firm Commitment to Decision and Support		
		Stakeholder Stakeholder Stakeholder Stakeholder Stakeholder Stakeholder		

The A3 documents critical information related to a decision — e.g., background, current condition, analysis, assumptions, proposed solution — and supports a process for sharing and engaging others in pursuit of improved decision-making.

Abandon sporadic overhauls of decision frameworks. DFM excels with continuous improvement, fostering a robust, agile decision-making process through ongoing learning and adaptation. It ensures learning accountability is as valued as the quality of the decisions made.

Decentralized Decision-Making

Types of Social Structures



While DFM optimizes complex decisions, it doesn't address the day-to-day need for rapid, high-quality choices required by frontline teams. This is where

decentralized decision-making (DDM) comes to the rescue.

Imagine your exploration and production teams humming with activity, each functioning as a well-oiled machine. They're making real-time decisions within predefined authority boundaries, independent of headquarters' approval. In the volatile world of oil and gas, such agility becomes the gold standard. DDM powered by Lean unlocks this potential, boosting efficiency and propelling your operations to new heights.

According to a 2022 Gartner survey, giving employees more autonomy over their work makes it 3.1 times less likely for an employee to report fatigue, 3.2 times more likely to have high intent to stay with the organization, and 3.8 times more likely to exhibit high performance.⁴

Traditional top-down decision-making can resemble a sluggish dinosaur, plagued by bottlenecks, delays, and missed opportunities. Information gets choked in pipelines, stifling innovation and responsiveness. The geologists, operators, and engineers in your teams — and closest to the action — are held back, waiting for approvals from those who often lack sufficient knowledge to really make a rational decision.

Empowered teams making faster, informed choices; tackling challenges head-on; and driving continuous improvement sounds ideal. But attempting to convert an entire organization to autonomous decision-making overnight can lead to disaster. Without the necessary decision-making skills and structure in place, the result could be a rapid onset of low-quality decisions and burnout.

Robust Lean systems must be carefully established that provide guardrails and develop the capabilities for successful, empowered, agile decision-making. A Lean operating system streamlines workflows and empowers people, making decentralized decision-making a reliable reality, not a risky endeavor. Essential elements of Lean that enable DDM include:

	<p><i>Standardized work:</i> Clear routines free up mental space for tough calls. Checklists streamline common choices, ensuring quality without micromanagement. For example, well-defined decision-making guidelines and escalation procedures minimize confusion and prevent delays.</p>
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	<p><i>Problem-solving systems:</i> Equip teams with the tools to tackle challenges head-on. Data-driven decisions fuel continuous improvement, informed by a clear understanding of cause and effect. Scientific thinking structures decision-making and includes reflections on past decisions and their impact, which hones future problem-solving skills.</p>
	<p><i>Strategy deployment:</i> Everyone in a company should be aligned toward a common vision with consensus-based goals, ensuring decisions fit the bigger picture and companywide targets. Agile decision-making demands decisive action, which must be orchestrated for collaborative execution and swiftly adjusted as necessary. The strategy deployment process develops and communicates a vision for the company down through the organization, which focuses all functions and levels on the right decisions to make now — avoiding the waste of working on too many or lower-priority decisions.</p>
	<p><i>Floor management:</i> A decision-making hub and huddle routine gives teams immediate access to goals, progress, and potential roadblocks and enables real-time collaboration, action, and adjustments. A "help chain" mechanism pulls in management when needed for decision-making support.</p>
	<p><i>Lean principles:</i> Embedding Lean principles within an organization fosters transparency and trust, removing the fear of failure and encouraging informed risk-taking. Instead of seeking a straightforward "yes" or "no" that comes with high barriers to entry, staff embrace a mindset that "it's safe to try," recognizing that failures contribute to learning. In Lean, this ethos of "trying" transcends mere attempts; it embodies rapid prototyping driven by a "creativity over capital" philosophy.</p>

Employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work.⁵

⁴ "Future of Work Reinvented Resource Center Primer for 2023," Gartner, February 2023. <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/4022828>

⁵ Naz Behesti, "10 Timely Statistics About The Connection Between Employee Engagement And Wellness," Forbes, Jan. 16, 2019.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2019/01/16/10-timely-statistics-about-the-connection-between-employee-engagement-and-wellness/?sh=c1587ab22a03>

Decentralization isn't a one-time restructuring event; it's about building a culture of empowerment and trust. The responsibility for developing this essential culture and capability for Lean decision-making lies primarily with leaders, guided by expert Lean coaches.

Lean Leadership

The journey to becoming a Lean leader involves a fundamental transformation, shifting from a role of control to one of coaching, and evolving from directive commanders to empowering catalysts. As Edgar Schein, a renowned expert in organizational culture, points out, "*The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture.*"⁶ In this new paradigm, effective leaders understand that adaptability, resilience, and performance excellence aren't singular achievements; they blossom in an environment where individuals feel valued, empowered, and heard.

Lean provides the perfect roadmap for this cultural metamorphosis. Instead of rigid hierarchies, Lean fosters flattened structures where information flows freely and teams closest to the action make informed decisions. Shared knowledge becomes the norm, facilitated by standardized processes and visual management tools that break down information silos and create a shared language for problem-solving.

But this shift isn't merely about tools and processes. It's about building *trust*, the bedrock of agile decision-making. Lean leaders adhering to the Lean principles — respect every individual, lead with humility, and encourage continuous improvement — establish trust in three primary ways:

- *Empowerment and ownership:* Teams aren't just given tasks; they're entrusted to make decisions and take full ownership of their processes and results. Trust in the Lean system allows leaders to shift away from constant firefighting and the apprehension of losing control, instead fostering a sense of confidence, responsibility, and purpose among teams, which in turn enhances engagement and performance.

Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout.⁷

- *Transparency and collaboration:* Open communication, shared data, and clear accountability linked to strategy deployment ensure everyone understands their specific goals and how they contribute to organizational goals. Practices like gemba walks, daily huddles, and decision reviews using A3s are instrumental in promoting dialogue that welcomes diverse perspectives and challenges assumptions. This approach not only builds trust between leaders and teams but also leverages the collective intelligence of the organization.
- *Shared success and learning:* Lean celebrates both victories and failures as opportunities for growth. "Fail fast" experiments encourage taking risks and learning from mistakes — without significant investments of time and resources — and foster a culture of continuous improvement without fear of reprisal. This mindset is crucial because the fear of making mistakes can cripple trust, hinder effective decentralization, and suffocate out-of-the-box thinking and innovation. Learning from errors enables swift course correction, while calculated risk-taking leads to more timely and decisive actions.

"Our success at Amazon is a function of how many experiments we do per year, per month, per week, per day."

Jeff Bezos, Amazon founder⁸

By fostering this trust-based environment, Lean leadership enables teams to navigate with agility and confidence. Decision-making becomes decentralized, with information and accountability distributed across the organization and tapping into the collective wisdom of the workforce. This empowers teams to swiftly identify and adapt to changing conditions and capitalize on opportunities as they emerge — rather than waiting for an approval from on high that may never come.

Modern decision science (MDS) empowers Lean leaders to cultivate a transparent environment where teams understand their decision-making autonomy and when to escalate important issues that they alone cannot or should not address. Lean leaders actively encourage innovative thinking by seeking out diverse alternative paths proposed by teams. These alternatives are then objectively evaluated using the organization's established metrics and values. While leaders are ultimately responsible for the final decision, they

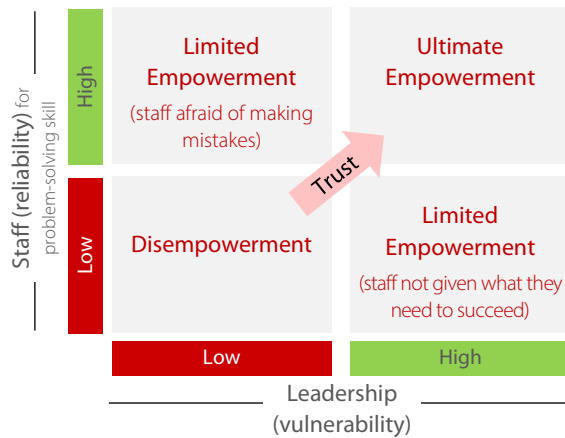
⁶ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Wiley, 1985.

⁷ Paul J. Zak, "The Neuroscience of Trust," *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2017. <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust>

⁸ Attributed to Jeff Bezos. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8871377-our-success-at-amazon-is-a-function-of-how-many>

continue to seek team input, transparently communicate any deviations from the team's recommendations, and explain the rationale behind their decisions and actions.

Lean's Impact on Decision-Making



Vulnerability & reliability lead to trust & engagement.

Lean leaders prioritize developing their team's decision-making skills. They hold themselves accountable for this growth and encourage the use of external coaching and learning resources.

Embracing Lean leadership isn't just about adopting new tools or processes; it's about redefining leadership itself. It's about creating a culture where trust reigns, teams co-create success, and everyone feels empowered to experiment, learn, and contribute their best.

Complementing Lean with Modern Decision Science



The synergy of Lean principles and MDS offers companies a blueprint for enhancing decision-making capabilities. This powerful pairing empowers everyone, from frontline teams to C-suites, to make swift, informed choices that conquer complexity and outsmart human biases. This isn't just about streamlined workflows; it's about building a culture where informed, agile decisions fuel continuous improvement and project success.

Decision Quality

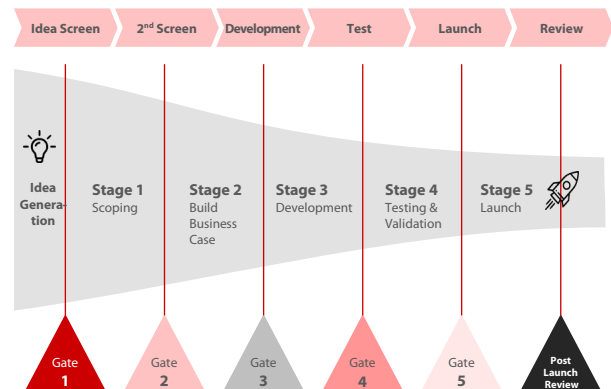
Progressive oil and gas companies embrace decision quality (DQ) as their compass for informed, strategic decision-making, particularly in high-stakes projects like exploration and field development. It shines a light on critical junctures like project maturation stage-gate reviews, empowering teams to prioritize the right

choices while ensuring environmental, regulatory, and financial risks are effectively managed.

However, the human element remains paramount. Three key questions pave the way for efficient preparation and confident decision-making:

- What is the true decision at hand?
- Who are the stakeholders truly involved?
- What information truly matters to them for this decision?

By addressing these questions, organizations can gather and analyze information efficiently, avoiding information overload while ensuring critical details are readily available. This aligns seamlessly with Lean's principles of waste reduction and flow optimization.



At its core, DQ hinges on the ability to frame projects and project stages at the right level. Instead of binary yes/no options, DQ offers well-defined menus of viable alternatives. Each option is backed by clear reasoning and recommendations from teams deeply immersed in the project realities. Imagine:

- *High-quality, digestible information:* No information overload, just the right level of detail.
- *Transparent assumptions and dependencies:* No hidden surprises, just clear visibility.
- *Tactical details addressed later:* Focus on the big picture, delegate specifics at the right time.
- *Alignment with goals:* Quantifiable (budget, time) and qualitative (values) considered, with trade-offs understood.
- *Logical reasoning:* Each option supported by sound rationale.
- *Clear communication:* Implementers, executives, everyone informed and aligned.
- *Contingency plans:* Ready to adapt if needed, with course correction or even termination possibilities considered.

Decision Biases

The pursuit of DQ can't afford to ignore the elephant in the room: us. While we strive for logic and reason, organizations are populated by human beings, and that includes all their inherent strengths and, yes, vulnerabilities. Human biases can significantly impact decision quality.

MDS shines a light on these unconscious biases, both individual quirks and those unintentionally introduced by leaders, teams, and stakeholders. Such as:

- Leaders subtly swaying decisions towards predetermined paths.
- Teams clinging to outdated approaches due to "sunk cost" thinking.
- Stakeholders becoming roadblocks instead of allies due to poor communication.

Combining Lean principles and MDS creates a powerful duo to tackle these challenges:

- *Unveiling the bias blind spots:* MDS provides tools and frameworks to identify and address common cognitive biases like anchoring, sunk-cost fallacy, and groupthink. It equips everyone with a metaphorical flashlight to navigate the hidden pitfalls of decision-making.

- *Decoding human behavior:* Behavioral economics sheds light on how human behavior and incentives influence choices. This knowledge empowers crafting communication and processes that nudge teams towards optimal decisions, seamlessly aligning individual goals with organizational objectives.
- *Fostering awareness:* Cultivating an open and honest dialogue about biases is crucial. By discussing these potential pitfalls and their impact, organizations create a safe space for challenging assumptions and exploring diverse perspectives. This aligns perfectly with Lean's emphasis on transparency and continuous improvement.

In the oil & gas industry, where unknowns reside beneath the surface, distinguishing good decision-making from chance results is crucial. Even the best-designed exploration well can come up dry. It's important to avoid penalizing or rewarding individual results based solely on outcomes, favoring instead the recognition of high-quality decision-making.

While perfect individual outcomes are not guaranteed, consistently making quality decisions across a portfolio will improve long-term return on investment.



Chart a New Course: Navigate the Energy Transition with Lean and MDS



Imagine a scene unlike today's energy landscape: empowered teams swiftly navigate turbulent waters, fueled by data and making high-quality decisions with ease. This is the transformative power of Lean infused with modern decision science for oil and gas companies facing volatile markets, disruption, and sustainability demands.

Traditional decision-making approaches are ill-equipped for the dynamic energy landscape. In their place, Lean and MDS offer a radical shift:

Improving any of the elements of decision-making — quality, speed, implementation — has a direct correlation with financial performance.⁹

<p>Empowered teams</p> <p>Unchained from red tape, teams closest to the action make informed choices in real-time. This fosters ownership, responsibility, and a sense of purpose — and frees up leaders to focus on strategic objectives. Empowered teams understand their decision-making boundaries and know when and how to escalate to leadership those decisions that are beyond their capabilities and ownership.</p>	<p>Informed choices at every stage</p> <p>Well-designed project and product development stages guide teams to focus on crucial details at the optimal time. Bias mitigation, transparent assumptions, and clear trade-offs lead to sound judgments. Contingency plans ensure swift adaptation when needed.</p>	<p>Streamlined flow</p> <p>Standardized practices eliminate waste, ensuring seamless decision flow, breaking down silos, and promoting collaboration.</p>	<p>Coaching leaders</p> <p>Leaders transform from micromanagers to empowering coaches, building a culture of trust and autonomy. Continuous learning hones decision-making skills across the organization.</p>	<p>Continuous improvement</p> <p>Learning is woven into the DNA of every decision. Iteration and adaptation ensure relevance in a dynamic environment.</p>

Conclusion

The choice is clear. Agile companies thrive while rigid ones falter. By embracing Lean and MDS, oil and gas companies can transform challenges into opportunities, not just surviving but prospering in the new energy landscape.

This future isn't about clinging to the past, but boldly embracing a future shaped by transformative decision-making. It's where quality, agility, resilience, innovation, engagement, and sustainability become the pillars of success. The time for action is now. Are you ready to chart a new course?

⁹ Karim Shariff and Jenny Davis-Peccoud, "Score your organization to improve decision effectiveness," Bain & Company, March 28, 2012. <https://www.bain.com/insights/score-your-organization-ame-info/>

About Ultimate Performance



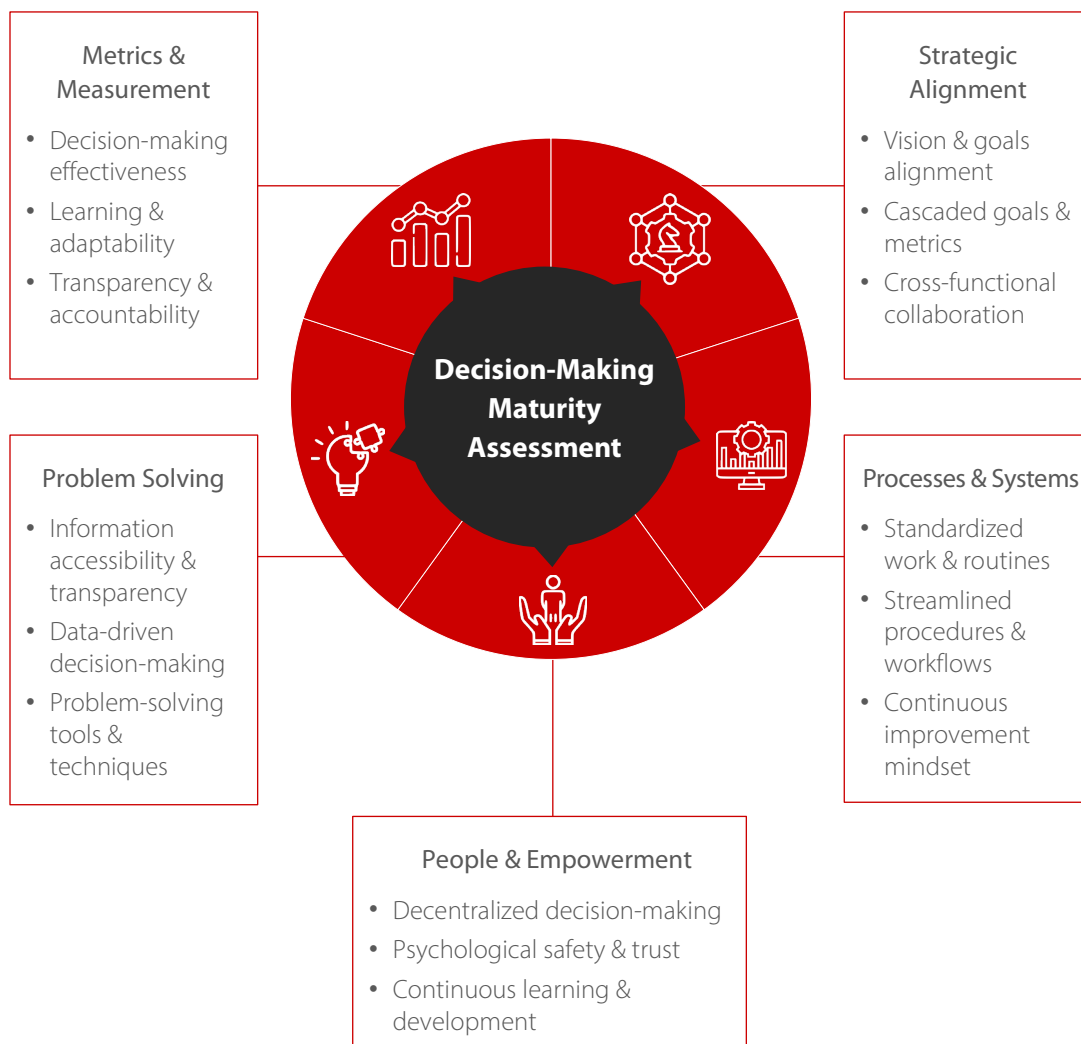
Ultimate Performance understands that exceptional decision-making goes beyond Lean principles. It requires crucial skills like actively encouraging diverse perspectives, facilitating productive debates, and recognizing how human biases impact choices. Furthermore, powerful planning, analysis, and modeling tools are essential for making well-informed, sound decisions.

That's why our team uniquely blends deep Lean expertise, decision-making excellence, and organizational health—all strategically focused on the oil and gas industry's specific challenges and opportunities. We leverage our extensive change leadership experience at high-performing companies to implement a results-driven approach, not just a limited capability-building program. This method, tied directly to business performance improvement, accelerates adoption, scaling, and lasting success.

Assessing Your Decision-Making Maturity

Our Lean-inspired decision-making assessment tool goes beyond checklists to evaluate your current practices against the hallmarks of high-performing organizations. By understanding your strengths and areas for improvement, you can unlock greater agility, efficiency, and achieve better outcomes.

Our assessment framework focuses on five key pillars:



Author Bios:



Nathan Holt

Mr. Holt is a seasoned expert in company turnarounds, having successfully transformed more than 25 businesses across various industries. He leverages his skills in strategy, culture transformation, continuous improvement, and leadership development to unlock billions in growth and hidden savings for his clients. He started his career at Accenture and Lean Horizons, where he learned how to deliver efficiency and stability for Fortune 500s facing growth and change challenges. He also worked closely with former Toyota and Danaher executives for 15 years, learning from their Lean business systems that are world-renowned for their success.

Mr. Holt's in-house leadership roles at Avery Dennison and Office Depot in the mid-2000s helped restore their fiscal health, boost their workforce resilience, and reverse their declining stock trends. Since 2011, he has focused his expertise on the energy sector, working as a continuous improvement executive at Shell. In 2022, he founded Ultimate Performance (<http://www.ultimateperformance.biz>), a consultancy that empowers energy companies to build operational excellence capability and high-performance cultures.

Mr. Holt holds an MBA in international business and a bachelor's in industrial engineering. He is also a Shingo organizational excellence examiner and a M&A post-merger integration advisor, further demonstrating his credentials as a champion of Lean excellence.

Stuart McGeoch

Mr. McGeoch spent 35 years at Shell International, setting up and running exploration businesses in high-risk, complex international environments, such as Nigeria, Benin, Tanzania, Namibia, and Mexico. He recently retired as the head of Shell's U.S. exploration business.

Throughout his career, starting from a role running leadership training and the Shell graduate entry program, he developed a passion for improving the way organizations make decisions. He is an experienced preparer, coach, and taker of business and operational decisions at executive levels. He is also a recognized facilitator of project opportunity framing, option development, as well as decision-design and -taking workshops.

Since leaving Shell, he has focused on developing software to improve how organizations make decisions. His work covers both the quality of decisions themselves (decision design and presentation for effective decision-making) and the process of decision-making (decision review board structures and effectiveness, and participant behaviors to support better decision-making for the corporation).

Mr. McGeoch holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He serves as non-executive Chair of West Thames Further Education College in West London and as a board member for Mission Success, a sport-based urban youth charity in Houston, TX.