

RED BEAR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Decision-Aware Enterprise

Decisions in flight: decision intelligence for the only choices an executive can still influence

Executives have extensive visibility into the results of decisions already taken and almost none into the decisions in flight right now, which are the only ones they can still influence. This paper argues that the gap is not an analytics problem but a missing object, sets out what a decision view contains, why what it shows first is uncomfortable, and how Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence keeps the view from becoming one more screen nobody opens.

Empower. Trust. Verify.

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Summary

Every screen you own is a rear-view mirror. A key performance indicator is a lagging record of decisions somebody already took. By the time a margin number moves, the pricing judgements that moved it were made weeks ago, by people who have moved on to the next thing, on reasoning nobody wrote down. The number is real and worth watching. It is also, by construction, a report on a period that is over.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the same organisation, a few hundred decisions are in flight. Some are waiting for an approval that will arrive on Thursday. Some are sitting behind one person who is travelling. Some are irreversible and are being treated as routine. Some have quietly expired. These are the only things anyone can still change, and in most organisations they are the one category of information that appears on no screen anywhere.

The remedy is not another report. It is a second kind of view with a different subject: not the state of the business but the state of its pending judgement. Such a view holds the decisions awaiting a decision, where they are queueing and behind whom, their age against the target for their class, the ones that are irreversible or unusually valuable, the escalations, the ones running on an intent notice whose clock has not expired, volumes and velocity by class, the rate at which policy is being overridden, and outcomes once known. Every one of those has an expiry. A revenue figure does not.

The first thing such a view tells an executive is almost always the same thing, and almost always unwelcome: a large share of the organisation's decision-making is queued behind a small number of people. The useful reading is one about capacity and routing rather than performance. A person who is a bottleneck is normally a bottleneck because too much was routed to them, which is a fault in the authority model, not a personal failing.

The counter-argument is strong and this paper concedes most of it. Executives have too many dashboards and ignore most of them. The distinction that survives is between a dashboard you consult and a queue that is work. A chart tells you about the organisation; a queue with your name on it contains items that will not move until you move them. But the concession has a sharp edge: if nobody acts on the view, it will become one more ignored screen, and the honest measure of whether it worked is queue age falling, not the view being opened. Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence (formerly GuardrAll) makes a decision a recorded object with a class, an owner, a policy context, a dial band and a clock, which is the precondition for any of these views existing at all.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS

- Chief operating officers and chiefs of staff
- Chief financial officers who chair the approvals that queue
- Heads of portfolio and programme offices who walk the spreadsheet round
- Anyone who owns the authority model

WHAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO AFTERWARDS

- Distinguish state from pending judgement, and say why they need different views and cadences
- List the nine things a decision view must contain
- Read a queue-concentration chart as a routing fault rather than a list of slow approvers

- Apply the one test of whether the view is working

1 What it is

It is worth being precise, because the vocabulary of "dashboards" obscures the distinction. An operational dashboard shows **state**: the value a measure has now, usually with a comparison to a previous period or a plan. State is continuous, owned by nobody in particular, and has no expiry. Yesterday's revenue figure is as true tomorrow as it is today, and nothing about looking at it changes it.

A decision view shows **pending judgement**: a set of specific, identified items, each waiting on a named person or a governed process, each with a class, a value, a degree of reversibility and a clock. A decision awaiting approval expires, explicitly when the commercial window closes or implicitly when enough time passes that the decision is made by default. It has an owner who can be named. It can be unblocked by a single action. And unlike a revenue figure, it responds to being looked at, because looking at it is most of what is required to resolve it.

The half-life difference is the practical point. Management reporting has settled on cadences that suit state: a weekly operations review, a monthly pack, a quarterly business review. Those cadences are badly matched to pending judgement. A decision with a two-day commercial window does not survive a weekly review cycle; it is resolved by expiry before the review happens, and then appears in the state reporting as a result rather than as a decision anyone made. This is how organisations come to make large numbers of consequential choices by inaction, and then discuss them as though they were market conditions.

There is a second difference, which matters more as the volume of automated decisions rises. State reporting aggregates by definition. A decision view does the opposite: it is a list of individual items and only secondarily a set of counts. You cannot unblock an average.

The best available description of what a decision view is for comes from McChrystal's account of restructuring a task force whose approval chains were slower than its environment. Empowered execution, pushing authority to where the information is, is only safe when paired with shared consciousness: a common, current picture that everyone, including the leadership, can see. Without the shared picture, delegation is abdication. With it, leaders can stay *"eyes on, hands off"* (McChrystal, *Team of Teams*, chapter 10). That phrase is the specification. The purpose of a decision view is not to give an executive more to do. It is to make it safe for an executive to do less, by replacing approval as the control mechanism with visibility as the control mechanism. An approval chain buys assurance by inserting a person into every decision. A decision view buys the same assurance by making every decision visible while it is still open, which costs nothing per decision and slows nothing down.

Key points

- State and pending judgement are different objects; the second has an owner, a clock and an expiry
- A decision view is a list of items addressed to named people, not a chart about the organisation
- Its purpose is to make it safe for a leader to approve less: eyes on, hands off

2 Why it matters

The cost of not seeing decisions in flight falls into three categories. The first is delay: a decision that waits has a cost proportional to what was waiting on it, and the wait is directly measurable once decisions are recorded with a timestamp. The second is misallocation of senior attention: leadership time spent on decisions that did not need it, and not spent on the ones that did. The third is the decision that was never made, the opportunity that expired in a queue, which leaves no trace and is the hardest to price and probably the largest.

McKinsey's survey work addresses the second directly, arguing that a substantial part of the time organisations spend on decisions is spent poorly: on the wrong decisions, at the wrong level, with the wrong people in the room. It is a survey-based account of how executives report spending their time, and it should be read as such; this paper attaches no figure to it. The mechanism is the useful part: senior time is finite, it is consumed by whatever is routed to it, and nothing in a conventional management information pack shows how it is being consumed (Aminov, De Smet, Jost and Mendelsohn, *Decision making in the age of urgency*, McKinsey, 2019).

For a measurement frame, Bain's four dimensions are the most serviceable: quality, speed, yield, whether decisions are executed as intended, and effort, the organisational cost of reaching them. Three of the four are observable from a decision view without inference. Speed is the interval from trigger to decision. Effort is the number of people and handoffs a decision consumed. Yield is whether the decision was followed through. Only quality requires judgement, and it is the one to be most careful about, because it is routinely assessed from the outcome (Blenko, Mankins and Rogers, *Decide & Deliver*, chapter 1).

What cannot honestly be counted should be said plainly. The cost of a decision nobody made is unrecoverable by definition. The value of a decision being made two days earlier depends entirely on what was waiting behind it. The defensible position is to measure the waiting, state the assumption that converts waiting into money, and let the reader argue with the assumption rather than with the data.

The bottleneck is a routing fault, not a person. The first run of a queue-age analysis produces a chart of decisions waiting, grouped by the person they are waiting on. That chart is the most useful output in this paper and the most easily misused, because it names individuals. The honest framing is capacity and routing. If forty per cent of an organisation's pending decisions are sitting with three people, the interesting question is not what is wrong with those three people. It is why the authority model sends forty per cent of the work to three desks. In almost every case the answer is historical: thresholds set years ago and never revisited, a past incident that caused a class to be escalated permanently, a reorganisation that left an approval step attached to a role that no longer exists, or a capable person who absorbed work informally until the informal became the official route. Treating that as a performance issue produces exactly the wrong response: the individual works harder, the queue shortens slightly, the routing is untouched, and the next version of the chart is contested rather than acted on. Queue concentration is usually accompanied by queue triviality: the same few desks receive both the decisions that genuinely need them and a large volume that do not, interleaved. Separating them is a threshold exercise, generally the cheapest intervention available, and it tends to make the case for everything else within a quarter.

An illustration. At Meridian Group, the invented organisation used in these scenarios, a queue-age view shows that a third of all pending decisions are waiting on the group financial controller. The reflex is to ask why she is slow. The record shows she is not: her median time to decide is among the fastest in the company. The financial-limit guardrail for her class was set at a level that now catches routine transactions

because it was never adjusted for five years of price inflation. The remedy is a guardrail change, not a conversation about her workload.

3 The challenges

Every organisation that notices this gap tries roughly the same four things first. Each addresses a symptom and leaves the mechanism intact.

Challenge	Why it is hard	What goes wrong without a method
More reporting	Each workflow system reports its own work in its own units; no two mean the same thing by "pending"	A set of unrelated counts that cannot be added or compared, quietly dropped after two quarters
The escalation meeting	A standing forum is a pull mechanism: an item reaches it only if someone is annoyed enough to raise it	It selects for decisions with a vocal advocate rather than the most at stake; the quiet, valuable decision sits in a queue
Chasing	A chief of staff maintains a spreadsheet and walks it round; it is a manual index of a live dataset, current as of the last update	It does not scale, and the queue is managed by someone with no authority over any item in it
Exhortation	People escalate because the boundary of their authority is unclear, because they saw someone punished for a bad outcome, or because policy requires it	Telling them to escalate less moves none of those; changing the routing does, and that requires first seeing where the routing sends things
One undifferentiated list	A single queue sorted by age treats a reversible operational choice and an irreversible commitment as the same kind of item	The genuinely consequential decisions are buried under routine ones that happen to be older
Coverage	A view built on one workflow system shows that workflow's decisions and nothing else	A better-presented version of the problem rather than an escape from it

4 How Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence helps

The contents of a decision view are not a matter of taste. They follow from the definition: it holds decisions that can still be influenced, with the attributes that determine whether they need attention now. Nine things earn their place, and two design properties matter more than the contents. The list must be differentiated: the Red Bear framework classifies every decision as routine, discretionary, significant or critical, rising with stakes, irreversibility, novelty, regulatory exposure and frequency, and carrying the class on the item is what stops the view collapsing into one list. And attention should follow irreversibility rather than value: Bezos's distinction between one-way doors, which deserve deliberation, and two-way doors, which should be decided quickly, is the single most useful sorting key available, because a large reversible commitment is recoverable and a small irreversible one may not be. Most governance keys on value alone, which is why it holds up recoverable decisions while waving through the ones that cannot be undone (Bezos, *2015 letter to shareholders*).

What the view shows	Why it is on the view	What Enterprise Decision Intelligence does	Requirements
Decisions awaiting a decision	The only part of the organisation's decision-making still open to influence	The cockpit, register and class views shaped by role; every aggregate figure clicks through to a filtered register whose total equals the figure	FR-REC-07, RBP FR-DI-06
Where they are queueing, and behind whom	Shows whether delay is distributed or sitting with a few people	Bottleneck and latency analysis attributes time to a named stage and approver; reach analysis separates waiting caused by absence from waiting caused by judgement, and leads with the class	FR-RTE-05, FR-RCH-05
Age against target	Separates a decision that is slow from one that is merely not instant	A target time per class in routing; overdue flagged against the class's own target	FR-RTE-01
High-stakes and irreversible decisions in flight	Directs senior attention by consequence rather than by whoever asked loudest	Class carried on every item; significant and critical decisions distinguished; precedent retrieved on shape including door type	FR-REC-01, FR-SUP-02
Escalations	Escalation volume by source is a direct reading of where authority is set too tight	Referral carries the full record, names both parties, records the reason and does not reset the clock; referral patterns reported per class quarterly	FR-RTE-03, FR-RTE-05
Decisions running on an intent notice	The window in which a leader can still stop something without having had to approve it	The intent notice runs with a clock; anyone with standing may stop it with a recorded reason; on expiry the decision proceeds on notice	FR-RTE-06
Volume and velocity by class	A class slowing down is an early signal that something upstream changed	The five diagnostics per class with trend, cycle time from two timestamps	FR-OUT-07
Override rate	A policy overridden constantly is not a control; it is a queue tax	Override telemetry by policy and class, presented as a question about the policy	FR-DEL-18
Outcomes once known	The only lagging item, and the only basis for changing how much discretion a class gets	Outcome tracking at the class's interval; the quality quadrant per class	FR-OUT-01, FR-OUT-08
What stopped moving, and what was never raised	The category hardest to price and probably the largest	Stall detection on three separate signals with an owner and the class; deliberate non-decisions on the same view	FR-OUT-11, FR-OUT-13
Reaching the person, not waiting for them to open a screen	The view must not depend on being remembered	A channel ladder matched to the class's urgency, quiet first and interruptive at intervals; escalation tiers with time budgets; the leadership fast lane decides in one tap with the stake and policy position shown	FR-RCH-04, FR-RCH-05, FR-RTE-04

What the view shows	Why it is on the view	What Enterprise Decision Intelligence does	Requirements
Routing that does not queue behind a diary	The bottleneck is a routing fault	Presence-aware routing to the nearest available authorised person; automatic cover; a timeout default recorded as a decision with an owner	FR-RCH-01, FR-RCH-03, FR-RTE-02

Design rule

The view runs live over the register; nothing on it is assembled for a meeting. Every aggregate figure lands on a filtered register whose total equals the figure, and filter state lives in the address bar, so a number can be sent to the person who can act on it.

Capture matters to this argument as much as the views do, because a decision view is only as complete as what reaches it. Connectors to enterprise applications, productivity tools, meetings, calls and messaging bring decisions into the register from the places they are already taken (FR-CAP-01, FR-CAP-02, FR-CAP-03, FR-CAP-05). Coverage is the first thing to interrogate in any evaluation, including this one (FR-CAP-07).

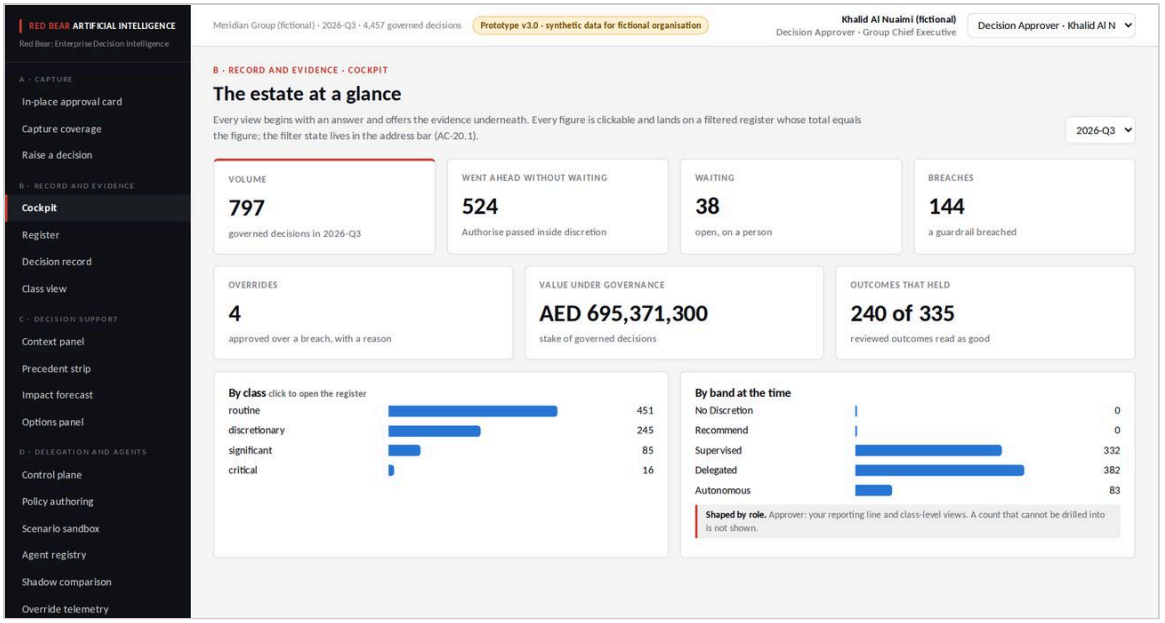
5 How it is used

Step	Who	What happens
1 Count what is pending, once, by hand	Chief of staff, PMO	Export what is outstanding from the three systems where most approvals live, with age and the person it waits on; the single number wanted is the share sitting with the busiest five approvers
2 Set the framing before showing the chart	Sponsor	Circulate the concentration finding as a question about routing and thresholds, addressed to whoever owns the authority model, not as a list of slow approvers
3 Agree a target time for one class	Class owner	What the class should take from trigger to decision; without a target, age has nothing to compare to and overdue means nothing
4 Fix one threshold and measure	Policy Maker, class owner	Change the guardrail or approval step sending the largest volume of routine work to the busiest desk; the sandbox shows the effect on the level mix before it commits; measure queue age before and after
5 Switch on the view	Decision Approver, executive	My queue for the person; cockpit and latency analysis for the leader; stall board for what never moved
6 Read the chart in order	Executive	Volume first, how much was routed here; then median time to decide; then the threshold that sends the class to this desk; then cover, what happens when the person is away; last, and rarely, whether this is the right person for the class
7 Change the routing	Policy Maker, accountable owner	Guardrail moved on the type, dial moved on the decider one point with a reason, cover nominated; the view shows the concentration fall or not

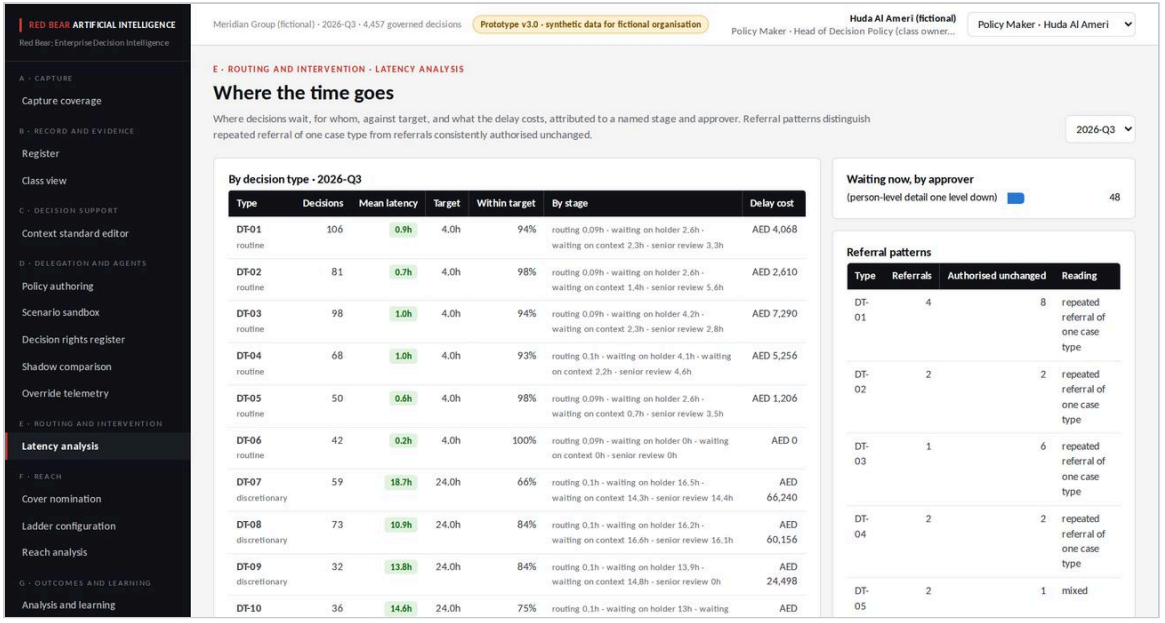
Only after the first four should the question of tooling arise, and in a specific form: what would it take to see this continuously rather than once, across all decision classes rather than three systems, including the

decisions made by software. An organisation that cannot name, in advance, one routing change it expects to make is not ready to buy a view of its routing.

6 The user experience



S-09 Cockpit: S-09 Cockpit. Headline figures that count decisions rather than results: awaiting a decision, running on an intent notice, approved over a breach, past target; the current mix of dial bands across the estate; and the reader's own open work on the right. Prototype render on synthetic data for fictional entities.



S-32 Latency analysis: S-32 Latency analysis. Where decisions wait, for whom, against the target for their class, and what the delay costs; the concentration chart, read as a routing fault, with the person-level view one level down. Prototype render on synthetic data for fictional entities.

7 Where the data comes from, and how it is checked

Inputs to the decision view

Input	Source	Check
Decisions in flight	Every capture route, terminating in one normalised candidate	Deduplicated on the decision; classified with a confidence, held for a person below the threshold (FR-CAP-07, FR-REC-01)
Class, stakes and reversibility	Classification against the class catalogue; the class's properties	Class rises with stakes, irreversibility, novelty, regulatory exposure and frequency; time pressure never converts a critical decision into a routine one (FR-REC-01)
Target time and escalation tiers	Routing configuration per class	An unbounded ladder with no default is refused (FR-RTE-01, FR-RCH-05)
Who it is waiting on, and whether they are there	The routing record; the presence contract	Every presence assertion carries the time it was established; stale resolves to unknown, routes to the holder and notifies the cover (FR-RCH-01)
Acknowledgement	An explicit action on the notification	Never inferred from a page view (FR-RCH-04)
Overrides	Explicit, with a recorded reason, as a separate event	The review obligation derived from the band at the time (FR-DEL-05)
Outcomes	Connected systems against the decision identifier; the owner's review	An outcome the product guessed is not evidence (FR-OUT-01)

How it is checked

- **Connectors are read-only and consented.** Capture and presence sources are granted by the customer administrator under least privilege; the decision, not the conversation, is captured (RBP FR-CN-01, FR-REC-04).
- **Every figure reconciles.** An aggregate clicks through to a register whose total equals it (FR-REC-07).
- **The clock is honest.** Ask pauses the service level; approve and reject close it; escalation neither pauses nor resets it; a retrospective entry is excluded from latency measures (FR-RTE-06, FR-CAP-16).
- **The AI proposes; a person decides.** Routing sends to a person; a default on timeout is a rule somebody wrote and is recorded as a decision with its reason; the product never approves (FR-RTE-02, RBP FR-DI-05).
- **The person-level view follows the reporting line.** Latency and reach analysis lead with the class and the stage; person-level detail sits one level down and follows the reporting line (FR-RTE-05, FR-PLT-08).
- **The view is never stored.** It is computed from the register on open; a report exported from it carries its date.

8 Benefits realised

Every measure is calculated from the organisation's own register against a baseline established before anything was switched on (FR-PLT-05).

Benefit	How it shows up	Measured by
Queues shorten and stay short	Items move because they are addressed to a named person with a clock	Median queue age per class, falling and staying down: the only evidence the view is doing anything
Concentration reduces	Routine work stops reaching the busiest desks	Share of pending decisions on the busiest five desks
Irreversible decisions get the attention	Significant and critical decisions sorted by consequence, not by age	Time to decide for critical decisions against target
Escalation reveals tight authority	Escalation volume by source read as a routing signal	Referrals per class, and the share authorised unchanged
Leaders approve less and see more	Intent notices replace approvals at the edge of discretion	Share of decisions settled within the decider's own authority; intent notices stopped vs proceeded
Nothing expires unnoticed	Stalls and closed windows on the same view	Windows closed while a decision was open, per class

9 Risks managed

The objection is the obvious one and deserves to be stated at full strength. Executives already have too many dashboards. Most large organisations have accumulated dozens, opened during the week they launch, reviewed for a quarter, and then consulted only when someone asks a question a person could have answered faster. A proposal that arrives promising a new screen has an unimpressive base rate. Most of that is real. The specific thing that is different here is not the visualisation, the data quality or the refresh rate. It is what is on the screen. A conventional dashboard is reference material: nothing on it is addressed to the reader, and nothing changes because the reader looked. A decision view is a different kind of artefact, because the items on it are work: specific, addressed to a named person, with a clock running. The right comparison is not to a management information pack. It is to an inbox, not as a compliment but as a description of the category of thing it is.

Risk	Control in Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence
Another ignored screen	Items reach the person through the channel ladder and the fast lane rather than waiting to be opened; the test is median queue age, baselined before deployment, not usage (FR-RCH-04, FR-RTE-04, FR-PLT-05)
The concentration chart becomes a list of slow approvers	Analysis leads with the class and the stage; person-level detail one level down, following the reporting line; the reading order is volume, time, threshold, cover, person (FR-RTE-05, FR-RCH-05)
One undifferentiated queue	Class on every item; the quality quadrant and stall board slice by type; critical decisions cannot be converted to routine by time pressure (FR-REC-01)

Risk	Control in Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence
The view shows one workflow's decisions	Six routes in, one candidate contract; capture coverage shown per channel (FR-CAP-07)
Faster approval on a fixed bottleneck	The fast lane makes approving easier, which is useful only if the routing behind it has been fixed first; the order in "How it is used" is the order (FR-RTE-04)
Silence read as consent that never arrived	An intent notice must be delivered and acknowledged on an explicit action; a stale presence signal cannot silently divert authority (FR-RCH-04, FR-RCH-01)
Nobody acts	The product surfaces the queue; it does not clear it; the honest measure is queue age falling, and it can be baselined before anything is deployed

Sources

Every claim attributed to a source names it in the text as *author, work, section*; the full references are below. Statements without a citation are Red Bear's own position, developed for Red Bear: Enterprise Decision Intelligence. Quotations are limited to fifteen words.

Cited as	Source	Authority
McChrystal	S. McChrystal with T. Collins, D. Silverman and C. Fussell, *Team of Teams*, Portfolio (2015): shared consciousness and empowered execution; "eyes on, hands off"	Practitioner reference
ADP 6-0	US Army, *ADP 6-0, Mission Command* (2012, revised 2019): commander's intent and disciplined initiative	Doctrine
Bezos	J. Bezos, *2015 letter to shareholders*, Amazon (2016): one-way and two-way doors	Practitioner reference
Aminov, De Smet, Jost and Mendelsohn	I. Aminov, A. De Smet, G. Jost and D. Mendelsohn, *Decision making in the age of urgency*, McKinsey Global Survey (April 2019): decision time poorly used	Practitioner research
Blenko, Mankins and Rogers	M. Blenko, M. Mankins and P. Rogers, *Decide & Deliver*, Harvard Business Review Press (2010): quality, speed, yield and effort	Practitioner research
Book 1	D. Oliver, *Empower, Trust, Verify*, Book 1 (2026), chapters 6 and 7: the seven-stage lifecycle; decision classes	Red Bear
Red Bear	EDI-FSD-01 v3.0 draft; Red Bear Platform Functional Specification RBP-FSD-01	Red Bear

Glossary

Term	Meaning in this paper
State	The value a measure has now; continuous, unowned, without expiry; what an operational dashboard shows
Pending judgement	Identified decisions waiting on a named person or a governed process, each with a class, a value, a reversibility and a clock
Decision view	The list of decisions in flight with the attributes that determine whether they need attention now; work, not reference material
Queue concentration	The share of pending decisions sitting with the busiest few approvers; read as a routing fault
Queue triviality	Routine decisions interleaved with consequential ones on the same desks; separated by a threshold change
Target time	The time a class should take from trigger to decision; age is measured against it, never against a single service level

Term	Meaning in this paper
Intent notice	The decider declares intent, a clock runs, anyone with standing may stop it; on expiry the decision proceeds on notice
Decision class	Routine, discretionary, significant, critical; rising with stakes, irreversibility, novelty, regulatory exposure and frequency
Channel ladder	Notification matched to the class's urgency, quiet channels first, interruptive ones at defined intervals with a maximum
Eyes on, hands off	Watching everything and intervening in very little; visibility as the control mechanism in place of approval (McChrystal)

The series

This paper is one of ten. Each stands alone and each follows the same nine sections, so a reader who knows one knows where to look in the next.

Paper	Title	Theme
EDI-WP-01	Cartesian Decision Making	Learning what happened next
EDI-WP-02	The Cost of Organisational Indecision	The decision that never gets made
EDI-WP-03	Trust and Verify	Visibility, not control
EDI-WP-04	Delegation Without Losing Governance	The boundary and the room
EDI-WP-05	Building a Decision-Making Culture	Judge the decision, not the result
EDI-WP-06	Decision Impact Analysis	What a decision dataset can and cannot tell you
EDI-WP-07	The Decision-Aware Enterprise	Decisions in flight (this paper)
EDI-WP-08	Decision Making Anywhere	The channel is part of the governance
EDI-WP-09	When Micromanagement Is the Right Management	Oversight is a dial
EDI-WP-21	The Customer Journey	Connect, Observe, Govern, Learn, Compound

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