The Strategic Playbook

The difference between producing an analysis and *framing a decision* is everything in the AI era. Anyone — with AI and a good prompt — can produce the analysis. What they cannot replicate is the contextual judgment that turns analysis into a decision someone can actually make. This playbook turns Chapter 4's Decision Framework into something you can use on your next piece of work.

The Decision Framework — three moves

A three-step discipline for translating analysis into a decision-ready proposal. It reduces the time between proposal and approval — often from months to minutes.

#	MOVE	WHAT IT MEANS
1	**Frame the decision**	State the decision that must be made — not the analysis you performed. What is being decided, by when, and what happens if it isn't decided.
2	**Identify the trade-offs**	Make the options and their consequences explicit. Not a neutral list — a clear-eyed account of what each option costs and buys.
3	**Name the owners**	Say who is accountable for each part of the decision. A decision with no named owner is a discussion, not a decision.

The same work, framed two ways

DOCUMENTER FRAMING — PRODUCES DISCUSSION

"This document presents an analysis of three options for the initiative. Appendix I contains detailed requirements. Appendix II contains a cost breakdown. Appendix III contains a risk register."

DECISION FRAMING — PRODUCES A DECISION

"**Decision required:** Approve Option B with a phased implementation, accepting a three-month delay to reduce organisational change risk from High to Medium. Option A is faster but requires simultaneous change across five departments the organisation cannot absorb. Option C maintains the status quo at $400K annual cost plus regulatory exposure. If Option B is approved today, discovery begins next week; MVP decision required by [date]. **Accountability:** [Exec] owns adoption; [Tech Lead] owns delivery; [Finance] owns the investment decision. **Recommendation:** Approve Option B — the phased risk is manageable and the delay cost is justified by the change-risk reduction."

The first is an exemplar of analysis. The second is framed for decision speed — the trade-offs are explicit, the owners are named, and the recommendation is owned. When a decision that should take days takes fifteen minutes, that is judgment at work. When it takes months, the delay is not caution — it is poor visibility of the decision risk.

The decision memo — the format

Decision required: [the specific decision, the recommended option, and the key trade-off accepted]
Options & trade-offs: [each option — what it's faster/cheaper at, and what it costs]
Timing: [what happens if approved today; the date by which it must be decided]
Accountability: [who owns adoption · who owns delivery · who owns the investment]
Recommendation: [the option you recommend, and the one-line reason it wins]

Keep it to a single page. The discipline of the constraint is part of the value: if it doesn't fit on a page, the decision isn't framed yet.

BEFORE YOU SEND IT

Test yourself: three questions

Pull up your last three significant pieces of work and ask:

- ? Did the deliverable lead to a **decision**, or more discussion? Discussion means you produced analysis. A decision means your judgment showed up.
- ? Could someone have produced the same deliverable with AI and a well-written prompt? If yes, you're not demonstrating unique judgment. If no, you're demonstrating contextual judgment AI cannot replicate.
- ? How long did the decision take after you presented? Days means you framed it well. Weeks or months means it wasn't ready to be made — and that's on the framing, not the forum.

Your decision memo

Take a real deliverable and reframe it. One page. Fill every line.

1 · Decision required

The specific decision, the recommended option, and the key trade-off accepted.

2 · Options & trade-offs

Each option — what it is faster or cheaper at, and what it truly costs.

3 · Timing

What happens if approved today; the date it must be decided by.

4 · Accountability

Who owns adoption · who owns delivery · who owns the investment.

5 · Recommendation

The option you recommend — and the one-line reason it wins.

People with decision authority do not want neutrality — they want you to exercise judgment so they can exercise theirs. Framing a decision well does not remove their agency; it enables it. That is the shift from documenter to decision-shaper.