

AN EBOOK

The Decision Brief

by Draftly editorial sample

FOR LEADERS WHO NEED CLEARER DECISIONS FROM THEIR
TEAMS

Decisions Fail Before the Meeting

Many difficult meetings are decision-design failures. The group arrives without agreement on the choice, owner, evidence, or consequence of waiting.

Separate discussion from decision

A discussion explores a subject. A decision commits resources or closes an option.

Before scheduling the meeting, write the choice as a complete sentence: We need to decide whether to launch the pilot in September or delay until January.

Define the owner

Input can be broad, but ownership should be singular. The owner hears relevant objections and makes the call. A useful meeting tests a prepared choice. It should not begin by discovering what everyone thought the meeting was for.

Write the Choice in Plain Language

Plain language exposes assumptions that polished slides often conceal. Everyone should be able to describe the available paths without specialist shorthand.

Use real alternatives

List two or three options that could genuinely be chosen. Avoid placing one serious proposal beside obviously weak alternatives. Include waiting only when it is a deliberate strategy. Otherwise, describe the likely cost of delay.

Name what changes

For each option, state which people, money, time, or commitments would move. This turns an abstract preference into an operational choice. The goal is not to remove complexity. It is to make the complexity inspectable.

Show the Evidence and Its Limits

Evidence earns trust when its limits are visible. A confident number with hidden assumptions is less useful than an incomplete signal honestly described.

Label each claim

Facts report what was observed. Interpretations explain why it may have happened.

Forecasts estimate what could happen next. Label each kind instead of blending them into one persuasive story.

Record the source, period, and strongest reason an important claim could mislead. If a figure is unavailable, use a visible placeholder rather than inventing precision.

Include counterevidence

Add the strongest credible fact against the preferred option. A leader needs to know what is known, what is assumed, and which uncertainty could change the decision.

Make Trade-offs Explicit

Every meaningful decision protects one value at the expense of another. Speed may reduce learning. Consistency may reduce local flexibility.

Name the protected value

Complete the sentence: We prefer this option because it protects. Use a concrete answer such as customer trust, cash runway, learning speed, or delivery reliability.

Then complete: We accept that this choice may reduce. This makes the cost discussable before it becomes a surprise.

Set a boundary

State which cost would make the option unacceptable. Trade-offs do not weaken a recommendation. Hidden trade-offs do. A credible brief shows what the team is choosing and what it is giving up.

Record the Call and the Revisit Trigger

A decision is complete when someone outside the room can understand the choice, owner, reasoning, and next action.

Write the record

Capture the chosen option in one sentence. Add the date, owner, decisive evidence, strongest objection, and first implementation step. Keep it short enough that people will read it. Preserve the uncertainty present at the time rather than making the choice look inevitable.

Choose a revisit trigger

Define what would justify reopening the choice: a threshold is crossed, a dependency fails, new evidence arrives, or a review date is reached. This prevents both constant reopening and defending a choice after its assumptions expire.