

THE A CHARGE TO KEEP RECOMMENDATION CHART

Decision Toolkit

A reusable companion for documenting consequential decisions before the outcome is known.

Use this toolkit when:	The discipline:
A decision carries meaningful consequences, cannot be easily reversed, or requires you to compare competing paths with incomplete information.	Document what you know now. Name the tradeoffs. Make the recommendation. Then preserve the reasoning so the decision can be reviewed honestly later.

HOW TO USE THE CHART

1. Name the decision

State the decision clearly enough that another person could understand what must be resolved.

2. Establish the context

Capture the challenge, objective, deadline, and consequences of inaction before comparing options.

3. Build real alternatives

List credible paths forward. For each option, summarize the path and identify its advantages and disadvantages from more than one perspective.

4. Make the recommendation

Choose a path and state it plainly. The chart is a record of judgment, not a substitute for judgment.

5. Commit to action

Record the next steps so the recommendation can move from analysis to execution.

6. Interrogate the reasoning

After the chart is complete, use the decision-specific AI prompt in this toolkit to test assumptions and expose risks. The responsibility for the decision remains yours.

The chart was developed to create a clear record of the reasoning behind a significant decision before the decision is made. In digital form, that same record can be used to test assumptions, scenarios, and risks more deeply.

PRINT OR COMPLETE ELECTRONICALLY

The Recommendation Chart pages that follow are electronically fillable and also designed to print cleanly. Save a completed copy with the date and decision title so it can become a permanent decision artifact for future review.

A CHARGE TO KEEP RECOMMENDATION CHART

Document the reasoning before the decision is made.

DECISION / RECOMMENDATION TITLE

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Summary of the Challenge	
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Objective	
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Deadline for Action	
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Consequences of Inaction	
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Use facts, assumptions, and consequences known at the time. Avoid hindsight language.

A CHARGE TO KEEP RECOMMENDATION CHART

Possible Paths Forward: compare each viable option before recommending a path.

POSSIBLE PATHS FORWARD

OPTION A		
SUMMARY	PROS	CONS

OPTION B		
SUMMARY	PROS	CONS

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Possible Paths Forward, Recommendation, and Next Steps

OPTION C		
SUMMARY	PROS	CONS

OPTION D		
SUMMARY	PROS	CONS

RECOMMENDATION

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NEXT STEPS

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AUTHORITY CALIBRATION

How the twelve decisions change as leadership responsibility matures

Decision	Year 1	Year 7	Year 15
Alignment	Treats alignment mainly as messaging and commitment.	Examines incentives, tolerated behavior, and operational contradictions.	Governs institutional credibility through what decisions teach people truly matters.
Purpose	Inspires people around the mission and founding story.	Uses purpose as a strategic boundary against attractive drift.	Protects institutional identity by asking what success will cause the institution to become.
Horizon	Concentrates on stabilizing present operations and earning trust.	Balances current performance with signals of future change and capability needs.	Redirects resources toward capabilities the mission will require years from now.
Incentives	Treats behavioral problems primarily as cultural or motivational.	Examines the reward structures that actually shape behavior.	Treats incentive design as a governing responsibility that reveals real priorities.
Structure	Focuses first on individual performance, expectations, and collaboration.	Tracks bottlenecks, decision rights, and overlapping responsibilities.	Redesigns structure when institutional design obstructs the mission.
Accountability	Uses encouragement and restated expectations to improve execution.	Clarifies ownership, authority, and how progress will be reviewed.	Protects credibility by assigning responsible leaders, authority to act, and review milestones.
Truth	Assumes openness and feedback will allow truth to surface.	Examines how information actually flows and what concerns stay private.	Insists that evidence and uncomfortable reality remain visible in consequential decisions.
Authority	Learns where formal authority begins and ends.	Recognizes the cost of delayed or ambiguous exercise of decision rights.	Uses authority as stewardship: clear enough to act, disciplined enough to remain accountable.
Conflict	Tries to minimize disagreement and preserve unity.	Looks beneath personalities for the unresolved institutional question.	Brings conflict into the open and resolves it through responsible decision-making.
Pace	Equates pace with momentum and welcomes acceleration.	Notices fatigue, competing commitments, and capacity strain.	Governs for the pace that allows the mission to endure for decades.
Succession	Focuses on stabilization while leadership development feels secondary.	Recognizes concentration of knowledge, relationships, and judgment.	Treats continuity as a governing discipline and prepares the mission to outlive the leader.
Legacy	Builds credibility while early patterns of documentation and shared responsibility form.	Examines which systems and responsibilities remain dependent on the leader.	Asks what the institution would inherit if leadership changed tomorrow.

AI DECISION INTERROGATION

Quick reference for the twelve recurring decisions

Use after completing the Recommendation Chart. Paste the completed chart into your AI system, select the prompt that matches the decision you are facing, and use the response to strengthen your analysis.

Challenge the reasoning. Do not delegate the decision. The responsibility for the decision remains yours.

THE DECISION OF ALIGNMENT

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, second-order consequences, and stakeholders who may be negatively affected. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF PURPOSE

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify hidden assumptions, long-term identity implications, and potential mission drift. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF HORIZON

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, second-order consequences, and long-term strategic risks. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF INCENTIVES

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, second-order consequences, and stakeholders affected by incentive changes. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF STRUCTURE

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, second-order consequences, and operational risks associated with structural change. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, second-order consequences, and barriers to execution. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

AI DECISION INTERROGATION

Quick reference, continued

THE DECISION OF TRUTH

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, suppressed risks, and consequences of failing to confront the underlying reality. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF AUTHORITY

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, consequences of exercising authority, and risks associated with delaying the decision. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF CONFLICT

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify hidden drivers of the conflict, risks associated with avoiding the disagreement, and possible consequences of confronting the issue directly. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF PACE

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, leadership capacity risks, and long-term consequences of maintaining the current pace. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF SUCCESSION

"Review this leadership decision chart. Identify blind spots, succession risks, leadership development gaps, and institutional dependencies that could threaten continuity. Challenge the reasoning but do not make the decision."

THE DECISION OF LEGACY

"Evaluate this leadership decision chart. Identify structural risks, leadership dependencies, succession vulnerabilities, and blind spots in the reasoning. Challenge assumptions but do not make the decision."

Remember: AI can expand the information available to you. It cannot carry institutional responsibility, weigh every human consequence, or exercise moral judgment. Use the analysis to refine your thinking; preserve the completed chart as the record of why you decided.