

The background of the slide features three interlocking puzzle pieces. A dark blue piece is in the top-left corner. A teal piece is in the middle-right area. A gold piece is in the bottom-left area. The text is positioned on the white background within the puzzle's negative space.

Reflex to Reflection

Mastery | **Clarity** | **Wisdom**

Exercise: From Reflex to Reflection – the right mindset

Objective:

Slow down and distinguish between simple, complicated, and complex challenges; allocating the right mindset, resources, and level of oversight to each. Demonstrate different decisions require different kinds of attention, and introduce a time-based, role-aware framework to clarify board vs executive vs operational focus

Key messages:

- Creating space for wisdom often means resisting urgency
- Leadership is about discernment: knowing which tools to use, and when because different problems need different kinds of leadership
- Not everything needs solving. Some things need stewarding.
- Delegating down or escalating up prematurely creates confusion, not clarity
- Greenhouse issues are about culture, sustainability, and mission integrity

Part 1: Decision Discovery and First Sorting

1. Identify 5–10 Real Decisions

Ask: “What decisions, dilemmas, or priorities (big or small) are on your radar right now?”

Participants write one issue per card or sticky note.

2. Introduce the Three Rooms (but not timeframes yet)

Explain the metaphor: “We’re going to use a simple metaphor to explore how we respond to different types of decisions. Some are straightforward. Some need expert thought. Others require us to slow down and work with uncertainty.”

Describe each room in the metaphor:

- The Kitchen – Simple problems. They require efficiency. Just get it done.
- The Workshop – Complicated problems that require expertise. Bring in tools or specialists.
- The Greenhouse – Complex challenges that can’t be changed by our actions alone. Situations which require evolution. These are living systems to observe, nurture, adapt.

3. Sort the Decisions into Rooms

Participants place each issue in one of the three spaces.

Facilitator prompts during sorting:

- “How do you instinctively approach this issue?”
- “Is it a fix-it problem or a figure-it-out one?”
- “What would happen if we acted too quickly or too slowly?”

No mention of timeframes or leadership tiers yet. Just let instinct and current norms guide them.

Facilitator prompts after sorting:

- “Where are most of our issues located?”
- “Is that the same for everyone?”
- “What can we learn from this?”
- “Is each of our rooms large enough to handle what’s happening in it?”

Once sorting is done and discussed, pause the group.



Part 2: Timelines & Roles

4. Introduce the Three Timeframes & Responsibilities

Explain “Now let’s step back. There’s another layer here. The way we’ve sorted these issues reflects more than complexity; it also reflects timing, and who is most likely to be leading the response.”

<u>Room</u>	<u>Pace</u>	<u>Typical Timeframe</u>	<u>Primary Responsibility</u>
Kitchen	Quick	0–6 months	Operational / Middle Leaders
Workshop	Medium	6 months – 3 years	Senior / Executive Leaders
Greenhouse	Long term	5 – 15+ years	Board / Governance

Share this quote from Matthew Clements-Wheeler, “Here’s the challenge: many executives work on 3 to 5 year improvement cycles, but true governance requires a 10 to 15 year view - if not longer. If we don’t make space for that longer view, we risk solving the short-term while starving the future.”

5. Revisit and Reconsider

Invite participants to **reconsider** their placements with this new lens:

- “Is this really a Greenhouse issue—but we’ve been trying to fix it like it’s in the Workshop?”
- “Are we spending board time on Kitchen matters?”
- “Where do we need more patience, or more delegation?”

Have participants re-tag or reposition cards as needed.





Facilitator Intro Script:

"In leadership, we're constantly being asked to move fast. But fast isn't always wise. In this session, we're going to pause, step back, and examine the nature of the problems we face.

We'll sort them not by who's loudest or what's latest, but by what they truly need: efficiency, expertise, or time to evolve after input from us.

We'll use the metaphor of three rooms -The Kitchen, The Workshop, and The Greenhouse - to help us sort the decisions we're facing. We're going to put each issue that needs a decision into one of these rooms create the mental space to lead wisely.





Facilitator Background Briefing

Different levels of management in non-profit organisations often define short, medium and long term timeframes in different lengths based on whether they have managerial, executive leadership or board/governance responsibilities.

Many c-suite leaders in charities and MATs define medium to long term plans as covering the next 3-5 years. Their boards sign-off on 5 year improvements plans or strategies.

But here at Mastery Clarity Wisdom Ltd, we advocate for boards taking a 10 to 15 year view (or even significantly longer than that). It makes sense when you think about it – if it takes 7

Why Use a Hybrid Format?

Introducing timeframes after the initial sort avoids defensiveness and performative placement. Participants start from instinct, then upgrade their thinking within the structure of the exercise for additional insight.

This sequencing:

- Reveals natural thinking patterns
- Surfaces governance drift or micromanagement
- Helps executives release control of long-term ambiguity
- Supports governance discipline around 10–15 year thinking (MCW ethos)

Resources Needed


- Three large signs or breakout zones: Kitchen, Workshop, Greenhouse
- Sticky notes or cards (1 per decision)
- Pens, markers
- Optional props: whisk, wrench, watering can
- Flipchart or whiteboard for final reflections
- Where are we spending time handout (optional): 0–6m | 6m–3y | 5y–15y+
- Label tags for: Ops / Exec / Board



Where are we spending time?

Room	The Kitchen	The Workshop	The Greenhouse
Atmosphere	Efficient Process driven <i>"Just get it done"</i>	Expert led Evidence informed <i>"Plan and deliver"</i>	Evolutionary Values-based <i>"Steward and sense"</i>
Usually found here	Operational Leaders	Executive Leaders	Board/Governors
Decisions your organisation is considering			
Timeframe	0-6 months	6 months – 3 years	5–15+ years

- Are we spending long-term leadership time on short-term fixes?
- Are we underestimating how long it will take for complex change to bear fruit?
- Have we delegated decisions properly?
- Are any decisions delayed because they need to move rooms?
- Who is the natural owner of this decision?
- Are we reacting too quickly—or not quickly enough?
- What is the cost of delay vs the cost of misjudging the type of problem?
- How far into the future are we looking?



Each of our tools encourages structured, values-driven thinking. Use them to bring mastery, clarity and wisdom to volatile decision-making environments.

For help facilitating our activities or adapting them to your board or trust, contact Mastery | Clarity | Wisdom Ltd.

www.mcw.org.uk

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