

Where the Decision Lands.

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The offsite went well. Your leadership team worked out who decides what, and the matrix that came out of it is good work. Regional directors can now move a production run to protect a customer commitment, or approve a vendor substitution under a set threshold, without walking anything past you first. You announced it at the all-hands and told people plainly that you trust their judgment. For a few weeks the quiet line of capable people stopping by your door nearly disappears.

Then Dana uses the new right exactly as it was designed. When a key customer's demand shifts, she pulls a run forward at one of the plants to protect the delivery, which means a weekend of overtime. The decision sits squarely inside her authority, and it is the right call. The plant manager, measured on labor cost against budget, responsibly flags it to finance. Finance asks, fairly, who approved a cost nobody planned for. At Thursday's staff meeting you handle it well. You back Dana in front of her peers and tell finance you will work through the variance together. The run ships on time.

A month later the line at your door is back, and if anything it is a little longer. The natural reading is that trust in a new system is earned slowly, so you reaffirm the matrix and remind your directors that these decisions belong to them. That reading is reasonable, and some of it may even be true.

Look again at that Thursday meeting and notice who was in the room. Every director had been waiting for the first decision under the matrix that cost another department something, and Dana's call was it. The matrix placed the decision with her. Thursday showed everyone it would be settled at your table, because the plant still answered for labor cost and the overtime dollars were never hers to commit. So the decision traveled upward until it reached someone with the standing to absorb what it cost.

Your directors read that evidence accurately, which is what capable people do. A decision right gives someone a place to stand, and whether that ground holds depends on what surrounds it when the decision gets expensive. Your response on Thursday was sound in the moment, and it also answered the question the whole room had been carrying since the offsite. The line at your door is a careful report of what they saw.

People learn where a decision lives by watching where it lands the first time it gets hard.

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An Insight from Kimberly Miller, EdD

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