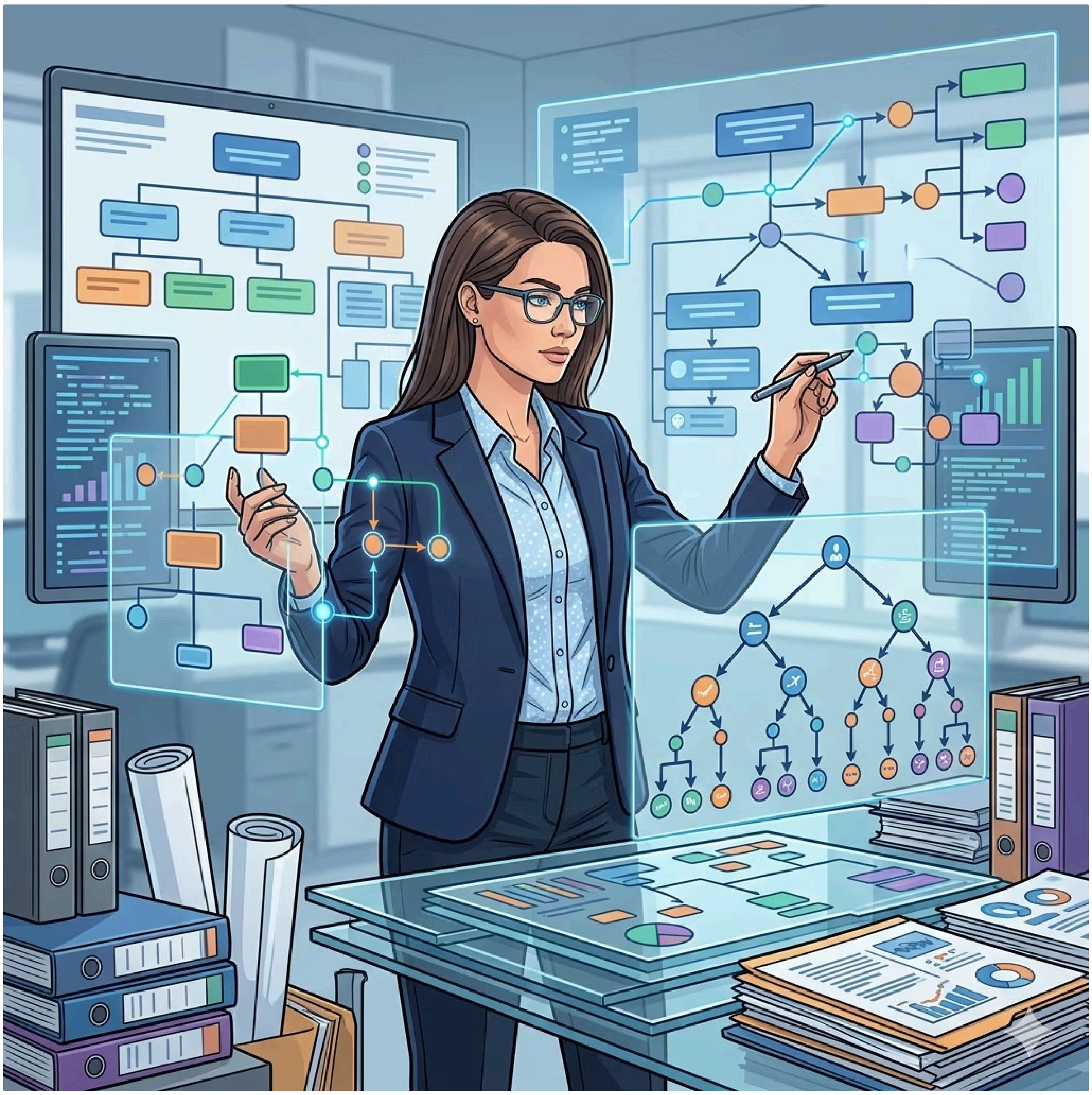
Company Decision-Making Structure Research Guide

A practical guidebook for career changers, consultants, managers, and early–mid career professionals who need to decode how organisations actually make decisions — and use that intelligence to communicate better, sell smarter, and navigate workplace dynamics with confidence.

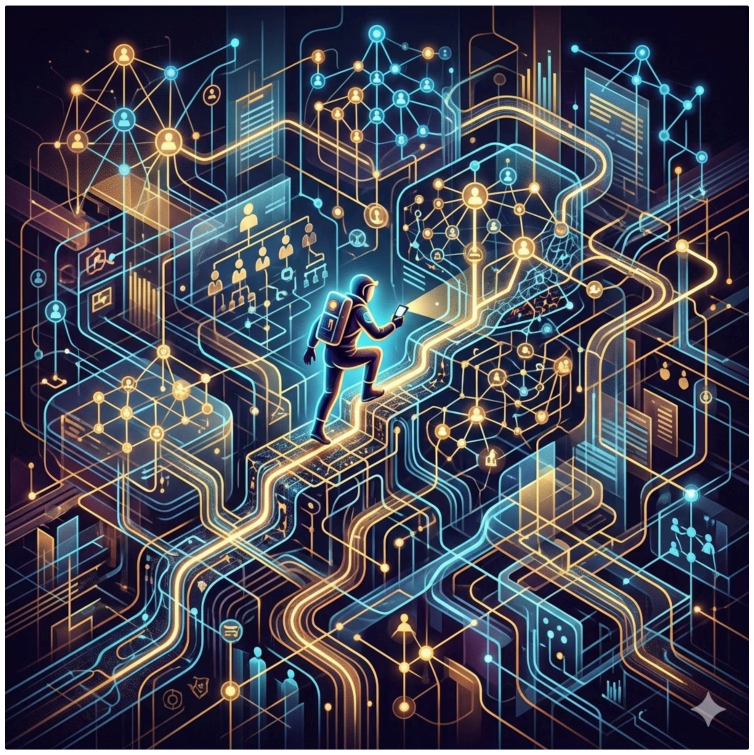


INTRODUCTION

Why This Guide Exists — And Why It Matters Now

Every organisation runs on decisions. But the people who appear to make those decisions are rarely the only ones who matter. Buried inside every company is an invisible architecture — a web of formal titles, informal power, budget gatekeepers, cultural norms, and unwritten rules — that determines what gets approved, who gets heard, and how long anything takes. If you don't understand that architecture, you're navigating blind.

Whether you're a job seeker trying to understand your prospective employer, a consultant scoping a new client, a manager pushing a proposal upward, or a sales professional trying to close a deal — your ability to research and map a company's decision-making structure is one of the highest-leverage skills you can develop. It's the difference between presenting to the right person at the right time with the right framing, versus spinning your wheels in the wrong room.



This guidebook gives you a repeatable, practical system for doing exactly that. You'll learn how to gather intelligence before you walk in the door, how to read the room when you arrive, how to identify real decision-makers versus symbolic ones, and how to adapt your approach based on what you find. Every section is designed to be immediately usable — no theory for its own sake, no jargon without explanation.

📖 Read Through

First-timers: read cover to cover to build your mental model before applying it.

🔎 Use as Reference

Experienced professionals: jump directly to the section most relevant to your current situation.

✍️ Work the Worksheets

Practitioners: fill in the action elements for each new company you research.

MODULE 1

Understanding Decision-Making Structures: The Big Picture

Before you can research a company's decision-making structure, you need a clear mental model of what you're looking for. Decision-making structures are not the same as org charts. An org chart tells you who reports to whom on paper. A decision-making structure tells you who actually drives outcomes — who has the authority to say yes, who has the power to say no, who must be consulted, and who is simply informed after the fact.

Most organisations operate with a blend of formal and informal power. The formal structure is visible: titles, reporting lines, committee structures, governance frameworks. The informal structure is harder to see but often more important: the executive whose opinion shapes the CEO's thinking, the department head who controls budget sign-off even though her title doesn't reflect it, the long-tenure employee whose institutional knowledge makes her a de facto gatekeeper.

1

Hierarchical

Top-down decision flow. Decisions are made at the top and cascade downward. Common in large corporates, government, manufacturing.

2

Consensus-Based

Decisions require broad alignment. Common in professional services, NGOs, Scandinavian-influenced cultures, and matrix organisations.

3

Decentralised

Autonomous business units make their own calls. Common in diversified conglomerates, private equity portfolio companies, and fast-scaling startups.

4

Committee-Driven

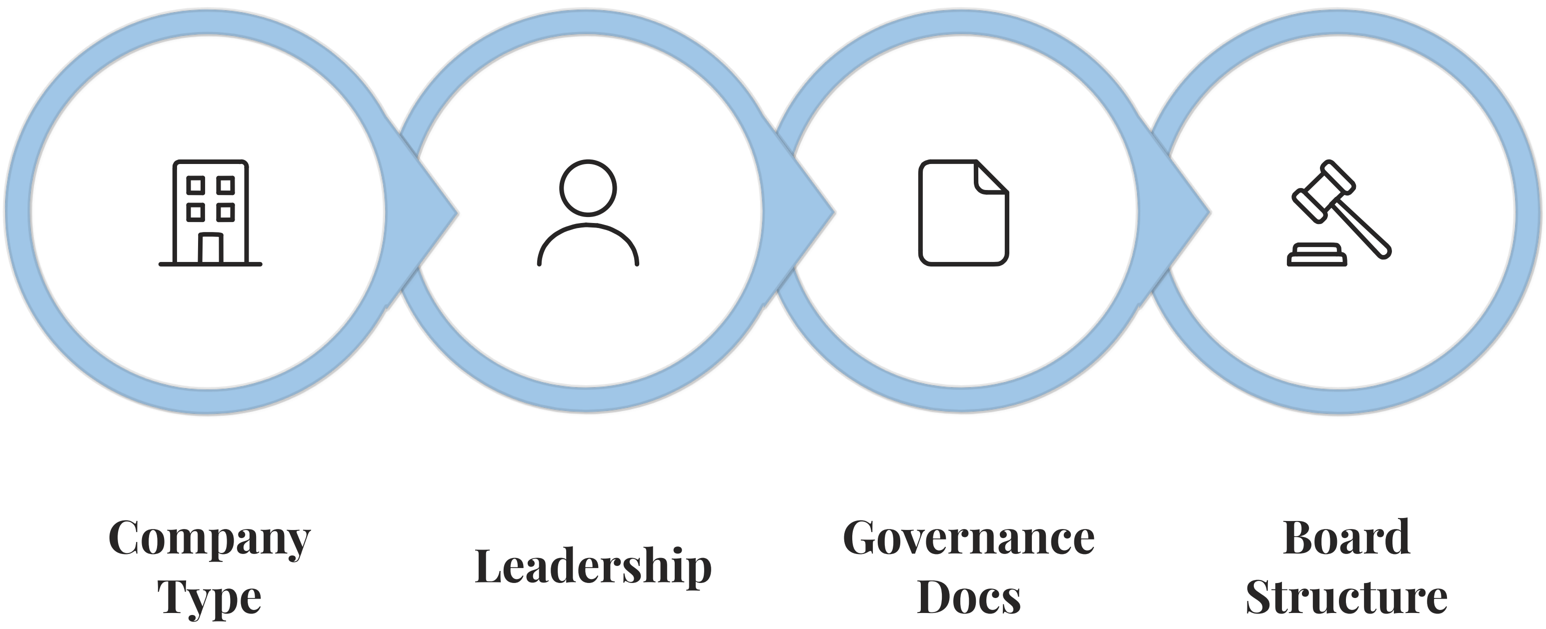
Cross-functional committees own key decisions. Common in healthcare, financial services, and heavily regulated industries.

Knowing which archetype you're dealing with shapes every other research decision you make. A consensus-based firm requires you to identify and engage multiple stakeholders. A hierarchical firm requires you to reach the right level quickly. Neither approach works in the other's context.

MODULE 2 · STEP 1

Step 1 — Map the Formal Structure Before You Begin

Your first task is to build a factual foundation using publicly available information. This is desk research — methodical, unglamorous, and absolutely essential. Before you speak to a single person inside the organisation, you should have a working map of its formal structure. This prevents you from asking questions that betray ignorance and signals to insiders that you've done your homework.



The goal of this step is not perfection — it's orientation. You are building a working hypothesis about how the organisation is structured, which you will refine as you gather more information. Think of it as sketching a map before a journey. The map will be wrong in places. That's acceptable. What's unacceptable is setting out without one.

> 🔍 **Pro Tip:** For publicly listed companies, the annual report's "Corporate Governance" section is a goldmine. It lists board committees, approval authorities, and sometimes explicitly names who has sign-off on capital expenditure above certain thresholds.

Key Sources for Formal Structure Research

→ **Company Website » Leadership / About Us**

Captures current C-suite, regional heads, and sometimes functional leads. Note who is listed first — sequence often signals hierarchy.

→ **LinkedIn Company Page + Employee Profiles**

Cross-reference titles, tenure, reporting language in bios, and how individuals describe their scope of authority.

→ **Annual Reports & Investor Decks**

Governance structures, board composition, major strategic committees, and sometimes explicit approval workflows for significant decisions.

→ **News & Press Releases**

Who is quoted in major announcements? Who signs off on partnerships, M&A, restructuring? Quoted individuals are almost always decision-makers.

→ **Glassdoor & Blind Reviews**

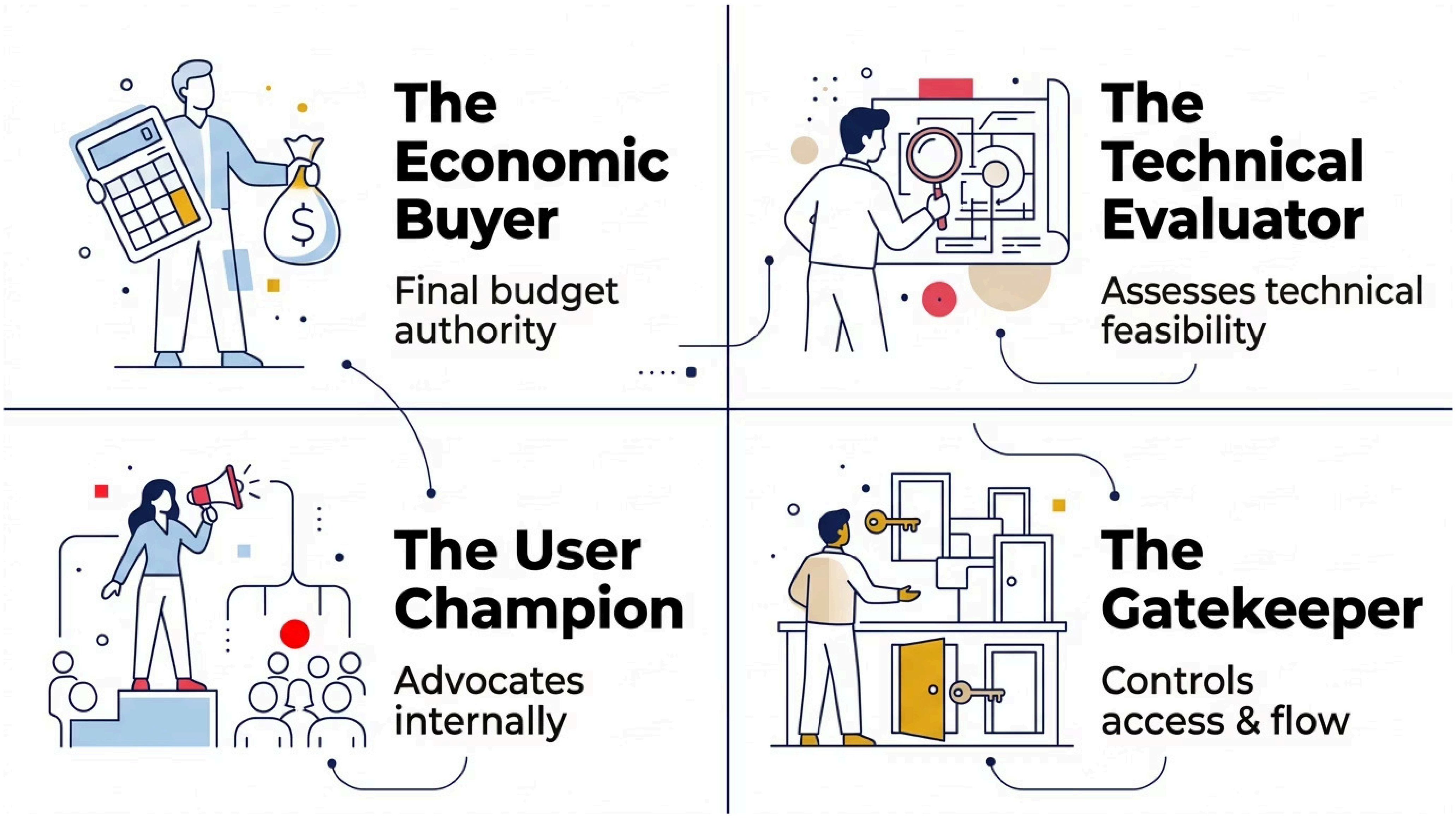
Employee sentiment data often surfaces informal power dynamics, communication bottlenecks, and who "really" controls decisions on the ground.

MODULE 2 · STEP 2

Step 2 — Identify the Real Decision-Makers vs. the Nominal Ones

One of the most common — and costly — mistakes professionals make is conflating title with authority. In large organisations especially, the person with the most impressive title is often not the person who will actually decide. Decision-making authority is distributed, delegated, and sometimes deliberately obscured. Your job is to cut through the noise.

There are four distinct roles you need to identify in any decision-making unit. Understanding which person occupies which role — and knowing that one person can occupy multiple roles simultaneously — is the foundation of effective stakeholder engagement.



How to Tell Who the Real Decision-Maker Is

🟢 Signals of Real Authority

- They are quoted in external announcements
- Others defer to them in meetings even when they're not the most senior title in the room
- They ask about budget, timeline, and ROI — not just features
- Their name appears on contracts or public filings
- Peers describe them as the "go-to" person for a domain

🔴 Warning Signs of Nominal Authority

- They always need to "check with someone else" before committing
- Their title is senior but their scope description is vague
- They were recently promoted or are in an interim role
- Key decisions in their domain were made before they joined
- They're enthusiastic but have no budget visibility

MODULE 2 · STEP 3

Step 3 — Decode the Informal Power Structure

Every organisation has two structures: the one on the slide deck, and the one that actually runs the place. The informal power structure is built from relationships, reputation, institutional knowledge, and proximity to leadership. It's invisible to outsiders but immediately legible to anyone who has spent time inside the organisation. Your goal is to develop enough external intelligence to approximate that insider knowledge before you walk in.

Informal power comes in several forms. Positional adjacency — being physically or organisationally close to a key decision-maker — confers significant influence regardless of title. Information control — being the person through whom critical data, research, or recommendations flow — creates bottleneck power. Relational capital — having deep trust with senior leaders built over time — means your recommendations get acted on while others' don't.

1

The Tenured Insider

Someone who has been at the company 10+ years, seen leadership come and go, and holds irreplaceable institutional memory. They often wield enormous informal veto power — especially in change initiatives — even from a mid-level title.

2

The Executive Shadow

A Chief of Staff, Senior EA, or trusted advisor who sits directly behind a C-suite leader. They shape what the executive sees, who gets access, and how recommendations are framed before they reach the top.

3

The Cross-Functional Connector

A mid-level professional who sits at the intersection of multiple teams — often in Strategy, Finance, or Operations — and is sought out for input on decisions that span departments. Consensus-builders by nature, their sign-off is often unwritten but essential.

4

The Subject-Matter Oracle

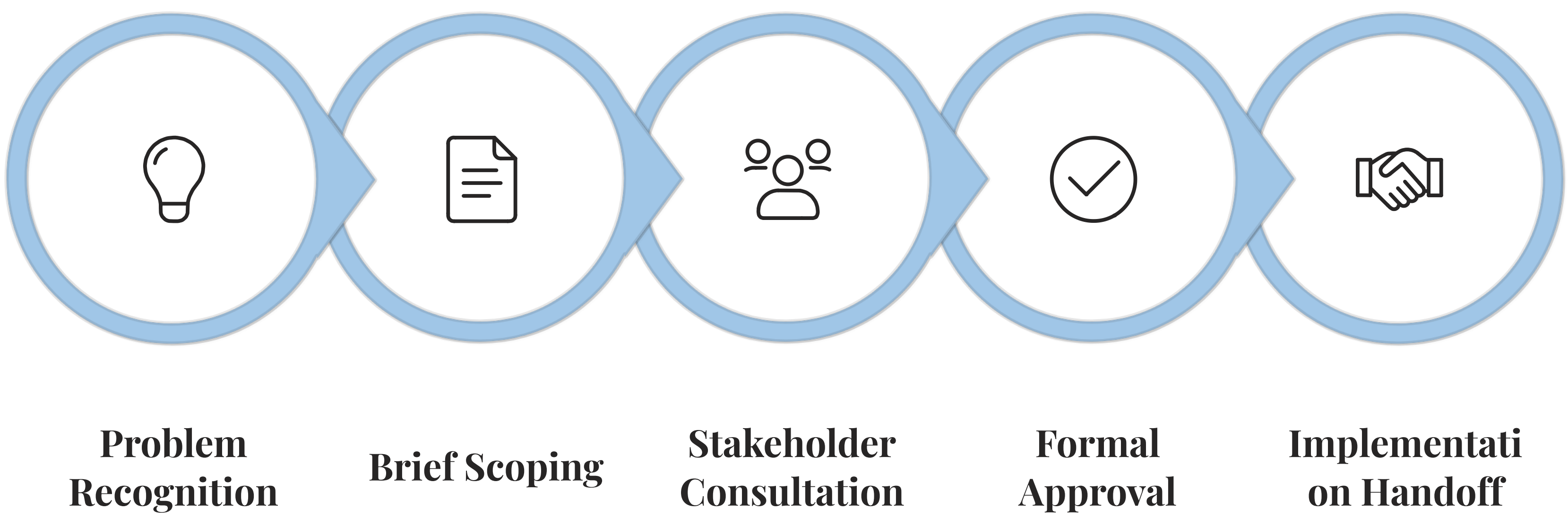
A deep technical or domain expert whose opinion is treated as near-final by senior decision-makers who lack specialist knowledge. In tech companies, this is often a Principal Engineer or Head of Data. In professional services, it's the top biller or practice leader.

💡 **Research Tactic:** Search LinkedIn for people at the company whose profiles mention cross-functional projects, steering committees, or phrases like "advise senior leadership." These are often informal power holders hiding in plain sight.

MODULE 2 · STEP 4

Step 4 — Understand the Decision-Making Process, Not Just the People

Even when you know who the decision-makers are, you can still lose the game if you don't understand the process they follow. Every organisation has a decision-making rhythm — formal and informal checkpoints, approval sequences, budget cycles, and governance gates that determine how decisions move from idea to action. Trying to accelerate a decision past these gates rarely works and often backfires.



The key question at each stage is: **who has the power to stop the process?** Approval is not always the hardest gate. Often, the scoping stage — where the problem is defined and the brief is written — is the most influential moment. Whoever controls the brief controls what solutions even get considered. If you can influence the scoping stage, you have significant structural advantage.

Questions to Research at This Step

01

What is the typical decision cycle length?

Does this company move in weeks or quarters? Fast-moving startups and slow-moving regulated industries require completely different timing strategies.

02

What triggers a formal approval process?

Is there a budget threshold above which committee sign-off is required? A headcount limit? A vendor spend ceiling? Know where the formal gates are.

03

Who writes the brief or recommendation?

The person who drafts the decision document has enormous influence over what gets approved. Identify them and, if possible, inform their thinking.

04

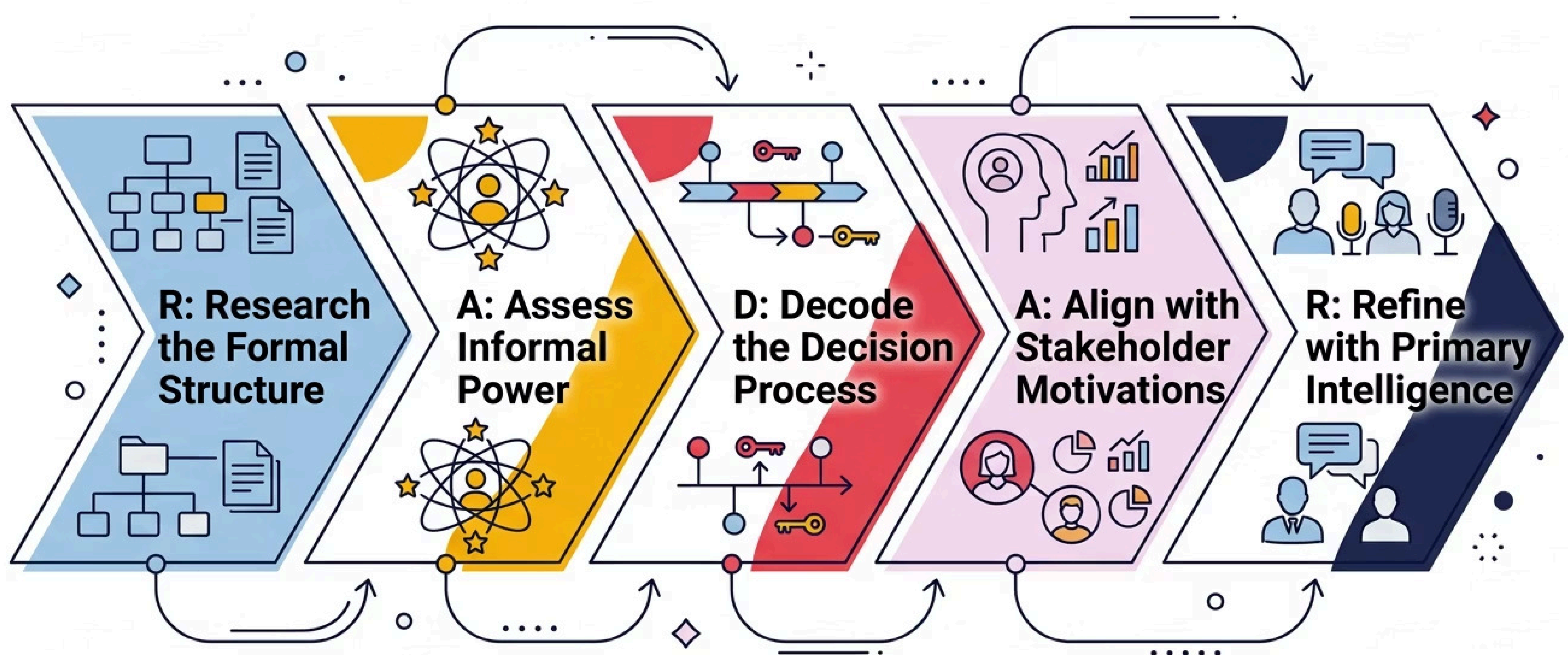
What does "yes" look like here?

In some organisations, verbal commitment equals done. In others, nothing moves without a signed-off document, a board resolution, or a budget code. Know what a real yes looks like.

MODULE 3 · FRAMEWORK

The RADAR Framework: Your Core Research Tool

The RADAR Framework is a structured approach to company decision-making research that you can apply consistently across every organisation you encounter. It is designed to be completed in stages — some steps take minutes with good sources, others require field research — and gives you a comprehensive intelligence picture before you engage.



What makes RADAR useful is its sequencing. You begin with what you can learn from the outside — public information, digital research, structural inference — and progressively move toward richer, harder-to-get intelligence. By the time you engage in primary conversations (the final R), you are asking informed questions rather than fishing for basic facts. This signals competence, builds trust, and produces far more useful answers.

🎯 **When to Use RADAR:** Apply this framework whenever you are preparing to engage a new organisation — whether for a job interview, a sales meeting, a consulting scoping call, a partnership negotiation, or an internal proposal that requires cross-functional buy-in.

RADAR at a Glance: Time Investment Guide

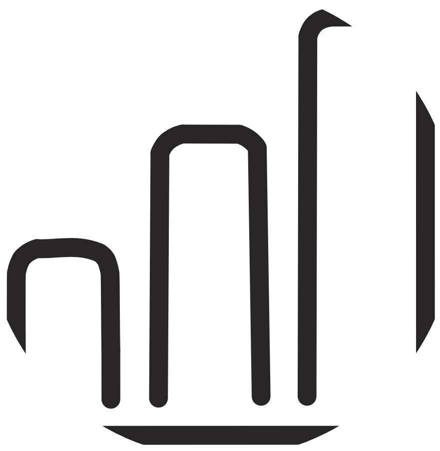
RADAR Stage	Time Required	Primary Source
Research Formal Structure	30–60 minutes	Company website, LinkedIn, Annual Report
Assess Informal Power	45–90 minutes	LinkedIn profiles, Glassdoor, News archives
Decode Decision Process	20–30 minutes	Governance docs, press releases, industry norms
Align Stakeholder Motivations	30–60 minutes	Exec interviews, LinkedIn activity, public speeches
Refine with Primary Intelligence	1–3 hours	Informational interviews, introductions, observation

MODULE 3 · FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder Motivation Mapping: The "A" in RADAR

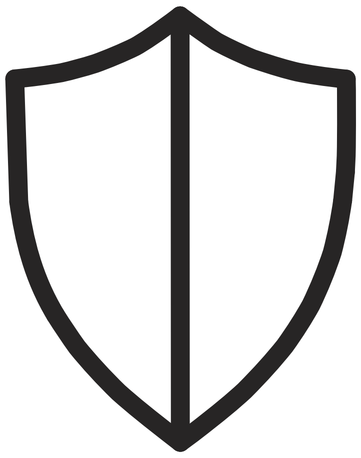
Understanding who makes decisions is necessary but not sufficient. To truly influence a decision, you need to understand what each stakeholder is optimising for — what they personally care about, what their success metrics are, what they fear, and what keeps them up at night. This is the empathy layer of your research, and it is what separates competent professionals from truly exceptional ones.

Every decision-maker brings a personal and organisational agenda to the table. These agendas are not always aligned with each other — and they are rarely identical to the stated organisational objective. A CFO may approve a vendor decision not because it's the best solution but because it reduces procurement complexity. A Head of Engineering may resist a new tool not because it's technically inferior but because adopting it means admitting the current stack was the wrong choice.



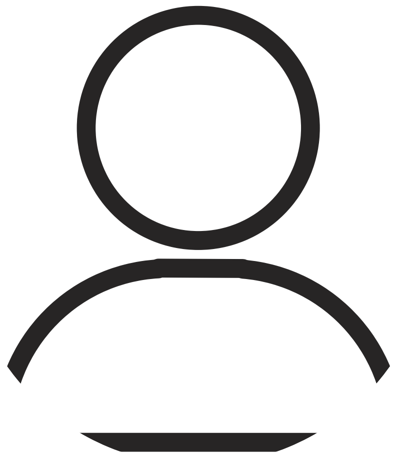
The Results-Driven Executive

Motivated by measurable outcomes, revenue impact, and portfolio metrics. Speak their language: ROI, payback period, competitive advantage, risk reduction. Show numbers before narrative.



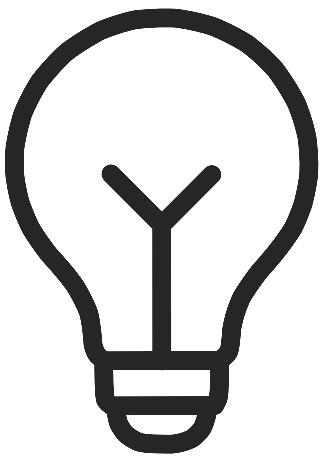
The Risk-Averse Gatekeeper

Motivated by avoiding failure, protecting the organisation, and maintaining compliance. Address concerns proactively. Offer references, case studies, and risk mitigation frameworks before they ask.



The Political Stakeholder

Motivated by relationships, visibility, and influence. They want to be seen as the person who brought in the winning idea. Give them credit, involve them early, and make their endorsement easy to give.



The Innovation Champion

Motivated by novelty, learning, and being ahead of the curve. Lead with what's new, what's different, and what others haven't tried yet. They'll push your case internally if you excite them.

ACTION ELEMENT 1 · WORKSHEET

Company Research Worksheet: Build Your Intelligence Map

Use this worksheet every time you research a new organisation. Fill it in before any significant engagement — job interview, client meeting, proposal submission, or internal pitch. The more completely you can fill it in, the better prepared you are. Blank cells are research gaps — treat them as action items, not acceptable unknowns.

Section A: Formal Structure

Research Question	Your Finding
Is the company public or private?	________________________________
What industry sector and sub-sector?	________________________________
Who is the CEO / MD / Country Head?	________________________________
What does the C-suite look like?	________________________________
What is the decision-making archetype?	Hierarchical / Consensus / Decentralised / Committee
Are there relevant committees or boards?	________________________________

Section B: Key Stakeholders

Name / Role	Formal Title	DMU Role	Key Motivation
______________	______________	Economic Buyer / Tech Evaluator / Champion / Gatekeeper	______________
______________	______________	Economic Buyer / Tech Evaluator / Champion / Gatekeeper	______________
______________	______________	Economic Buyer / Tech Evaluator / Champion / Gatekeeper	______________

Section C: Decision Process

Process Question	Your Finding
What is the typical decision cycle?	________________________________
What approval thresholds trigger committee sign-off?	________________________________
Who owns the brief / recommendation document?	________________________________
What does a confirmed "yes" look like here?	________________________________

📌 **Tip:** Print or duplicate this worksheet for each company you research. A completed worksheet is your "pre-flight checklist" — if you cannot answer most of these questions before entering a meeting, you need more research time.

ACTION ELEMENT 2 · CHECKLIST

Pre-Engagement Research Checklist

This checklist confirms that your research is complete before any significant professional engagement. Run through this before a job interview, a first client meeting, a proposal presentation, or a cross-functional pitch. Check off each item only when you can confidently answer the underlying question — not just when you've attempted to find it.

✅ Formal Structure Research

- I know whether this company is public, private, or PE-backed
- I have identified the full C-suite and their functional remits
- I have read at least one governance or leadership document
- I know what decision-making archetype this company uses
- I have identified any relevant committees or approval bodies
- I know the company's current strategic priorities

✅ Informal Power Research

- I have identified at least one informal power holder beyond the C-suite
- I have noted tenure patterns among key individuals
- I have checked LinkedIn for cross-functional connectors
- I have reviewed Glassdoor or Blind for cultural and power signals
- I have identified the Executive Shadow or Chief of Staff if one exists

✅ Decision Process Research

- I know the typical decision cycle length for this type of company
- I know what triggers a formal approval requirement
- I have identified who is likely to own the brief or recommendation
- I understand what a formal "yes" looks like in this organisation
- I am aware of any upcoming budget or planning cycles that affect timing

✅ Stakeholder Motivation Research

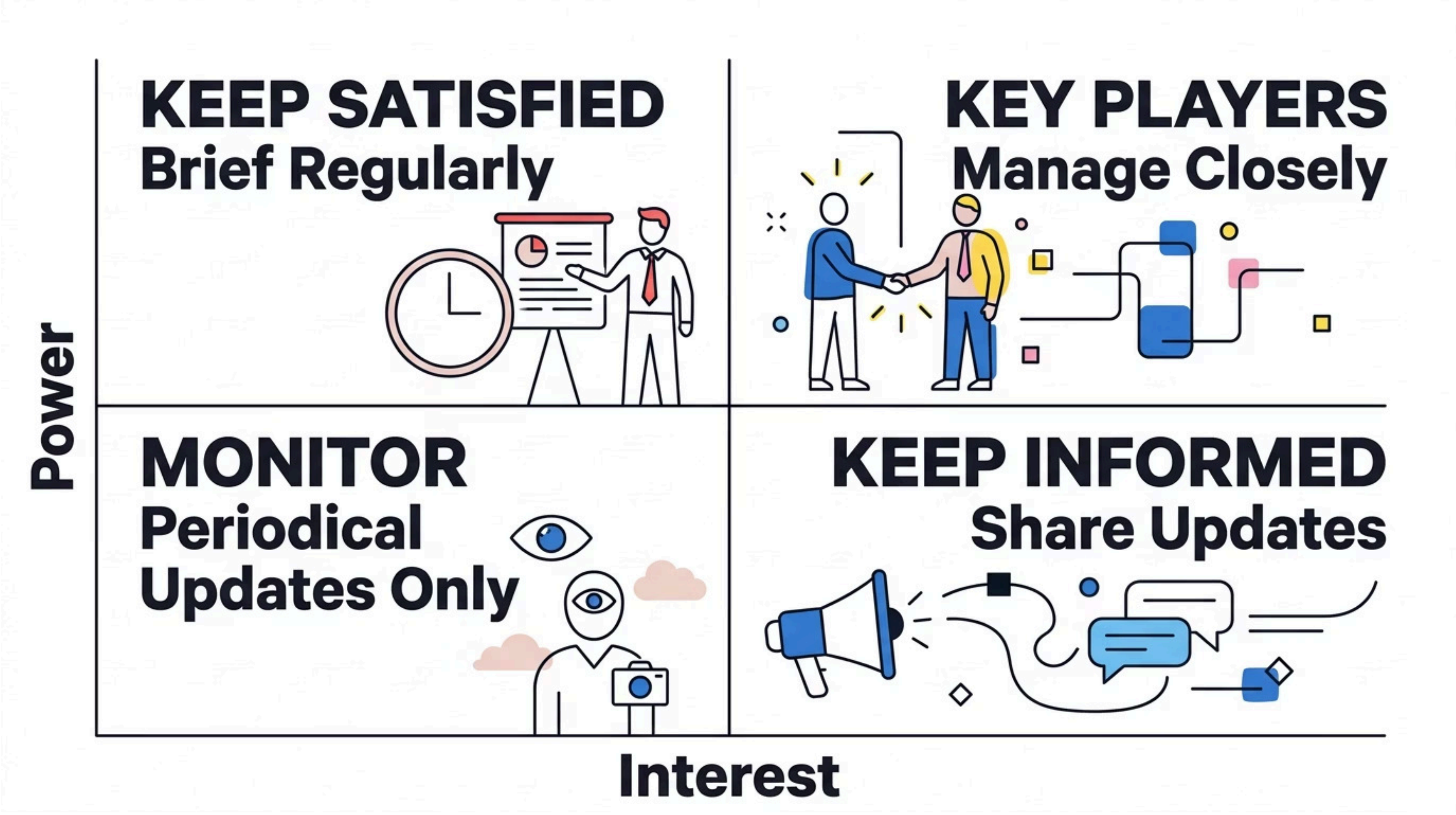
- I have mapped at least 2–3 key stakeholders to their motivation type
- I know what each stakeholder is measured on / rewarded for
- I have identified potential resistors and their likely objections
- I have identified my internal champion (if one exists)
- I have a communication approach tailored to each key stakeholder

ACTION ELEMENT 3 · FRAMEWORK

The Stakeholder Power-Interest Grid: Prioritise Your Effort

Not all stakeholders deserve equal attention. Spending the same time and energy on every person in an organisation is neither feasible nor strategic. The Power-Interest Grid gives you a simple, visual tool for prioritising your engagement — ensuring you invest most deeply where it matters most.

Place each stakeholder you have identified on the grid based on two dimensions: how much power they have over the decision (vertical axis), and how much personal interest they have in the outcome (horizontal axis). The resulting quadrant tells you how to engage them.



How to Use This Grid in Practice

1

List every stakeholder you've identified, regardless of title

Include formal decision-makers, informal power holders, gatekeepers, and potential resistors. Don't self-censor at this stage.

2

Assign each stakeholder to a quadrant based on your research

Be honest about power levels. A junior employee with access to the CEO and control over key data may belong in the top quadrant despite their title.

3

Build a tailored engagement strategy per quadrant

Key Players get your deepest investment. Keep Satisfied stakeholders get timely, clean, no-surprise updates. Keep Informed stakeholders get enough information to become advocates. Monitors get minimal proactive effort.

MODULE 4 · INDUSTRY CONTEXT

Decision-Making Norms by Industry: What to Expect Before You Walk In

Different industries have deeply ingrained decision-making cultures that persist across individual companies. Understanding these norms before you engage a specific organisation gives you a calibrated baseline — a starting hypothesis you can confirm or challenge with your research. Going into a financial services firm expecting startup-speed decision-making is a fast path to frustration. Equally, assuming a tech scaleup has the governance rigour of a bank will cause you to move too slowly.

1

Financial Services & Banking

Highly committee-driven. Compliance, risk, and legal are effective veto-holders in most decisions. Budget approvals are formal and documented. Expect long cycles (weeks to months) and multiple layers of sign-off. Relationship history matters enormously.

2

Technology & SaaS

Varies dramatically by stage. Seed-stage startups: founder decides, often the same day. Growth-stage: department heads have real authority with light governance. Enterprise tech: matrix structures, cross-functional input requirements, and surprisingly long cycles despite cultural speed norms.

3

Professional Services (Consulting, Legal, Accounting)

Partner-led and often highly political. The equity partnership structure means formal hierarchy is flat but social hierarchy is steep. Senior partner relationships are non-negotiable keys. Consensus-building within practice groups is essential.

4

Manufacturing & Industrial

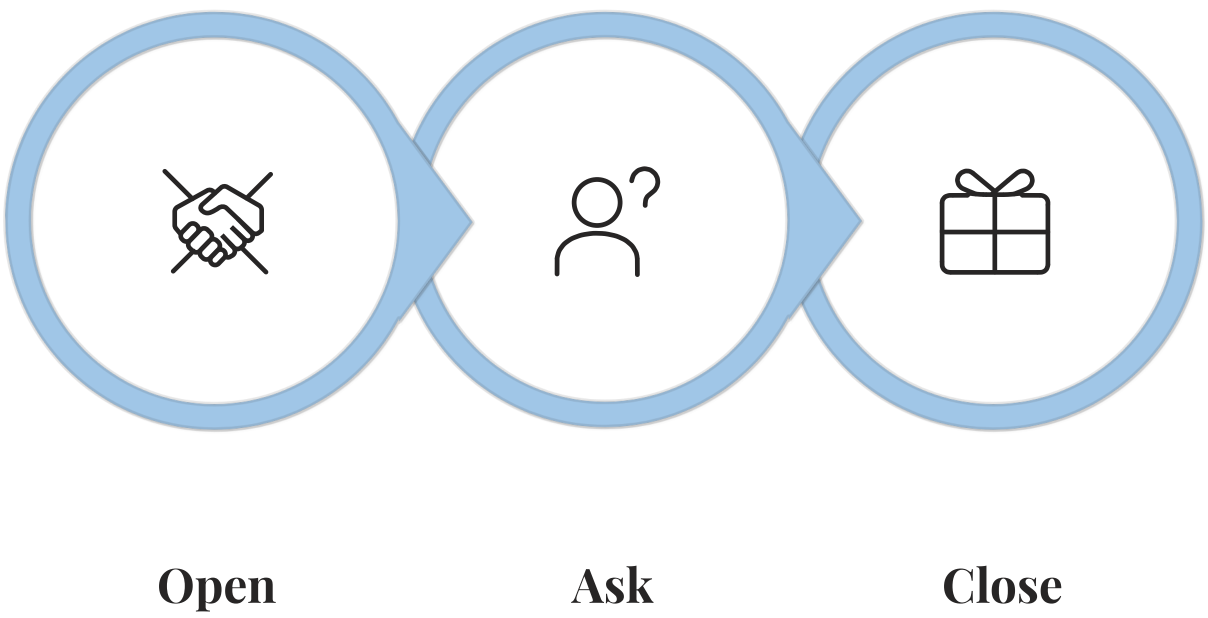
Engineering and operations leadership tends to hold strong informal veto power. Procurement processes are formal and documented. Technical evaluation is treated as a prerequisite to business-case evaluation. ROI frameworks are expected and must be quantitative.

⚠️ **Calibration Warning:** These are generalisations. Always validate industry norms against company-specific intelligence. A tech company with a legacy enterprise background may behave far more like financial services than its sector suggests.

The Informational Interview: Your Most Powerful Research Tool

All the desk research in the world cannot fully substitute for a well-conducted conversation with someone who has lived inside the organisation you're studying. The informational interview — a structured, brief, purposeful conversation with an insider or knowledgeable proxy — is the highest-value intelligence-gathering tool available to you. When done well, a single 30-minute conversation can fill in intelligence gaps that would take days of secondary research to approximate.

The key to a great informational interview is coming in with prepared questions that signal you've already done your homework, while leaving room for the conversation to reveal what you didn't know to ask. People are far more forthcoming when they feel you've respected their time by preparing. Showing up with basic questions you could have answered from the company website signals disrespect and wastes the conversation.



Prepared Questions for Decoding Decision-Making Structures

1

On Formal Structure

"Who typically owns decisions like [type of decision] in your organisation? Does that vary by business unit or geography?"

2

On Process

"Walk me through the last time a decision like this was made. Where did it start, who was involved, and what made it move forward?"

3

On Informal Power

"Who are the people in this organisation whose opinion really shapes outcomes — even if they're not the most senior person in the room?"

4

On Culture

"Would you describe this as an organisation where decisions tend to happen fast and get revisited, or where they move slowly but stick once made?"

MODULE 5 · APPLICATION

Reading the Room: Real-Time Decision Intelligence

Your research doesn't end when you walk into the meeting. Every interaction is an opportunity to gather real-time intelligence that validates, challenges, or refines your pre-meeting hypothesis. The best professionals are constantly reading the room — noticing who speaks first, who others look at before they speak, who controls the agenda, and whose questions carry the most weight.

Real-time observation is particularly powerful for surfacing informal power dynamics that even insider conversations don't always reveal. The person who sets the agenda, who goes off-mute first on a video call, who gets interrupted least, and who summarises the room's view at the end of a meeting — these are almost always informal authority signals that your pre-meeting research may have missed.

1

Who Speaks First?

The first speaker typically sets the frame. In hierarchical organisations, this is usually the most senior person. In consensus-based organisations, it's often the person who "called" the meeting — who may not be the most senior but has taken ownership.

2

Who Do Others Look At?

Watch eye movement when a question is asked or a contentious point is raised. People instinctively look toward the person whose opinion matters most to them. This is one of the most reliable real-time signals of where real authority sits.

3

Who Summarises?

The person who summarises the group's consensus at the end of a discussion has implicit authority — they're framing what was "decided." In many organisations, this is the de facto decision-maker regardless of title.

4

Who Asks the Budget Question?

Whoever first asks about cost, timeline, or budget authority is almost certainly the Economic Buyer or is representing their interests. This question is a strong signal of where final sign-off lives.

REAL-WORLD APPLICATION

Case Example: Mapping Decision-Making at a Mid-Size Tech Company

Context: Priya is a senior consultant at an independent advisory firm, preparing to pitch a digital transformation engagement to a 400-person SaaS company. She has one hour before her first meeting with the client. Here's how she applies the RADAR framework to research the company's decision-making structure in 90 minutes.

> **The Situation:** Priya's firm has been introduced to the company by a mutual contact. Her contact is the VP of Product, but the formal decision to hire a transformation consultant would sit above that level. She knows she's meeting with two people: the VP of Product and someone listed as "Head of Strategy Operations." She has never worked with this company before.

1

R — Research (20 mins)

Priya reviews the leadership page: 6-person C-suite. The COO has the broadest remit. She finds a 2023 investor update noting "centralised vendor approval above $50K." This is a key process data point.

2

A — Assess Informal Power (25 mins)

LinkedIn check on "Head of Strategy Operations" reveals 8 years at the company, cross-functional project ownership, and a bio that says "advise C-suite on strategic initiatives." This is the Executive Shadow / Cross-Functional Connector. High priority stakeholder.

3

D — Decode Process (10 mins)

Glassdoor reviews mention "decisions above a certain size go to an ops committee." Combined with the investor update, Priya now knows there is a formal approval gate she must plan for. VP of Product cannot approve alone.

4

A — Align Motivations (20 mins)

The COO's recent LinkedIn post is about "operational efficiency at scale." The VP of Product's posts are about "customer experience and product velocity." Priya tailors her opening to both — ROI and process efficiency for the COO's orbit; speed and customer impact for her direct contact.

5

R — Refine (15 mins)

A 15-minute call with the mutual contact reveals that the COO is the Economic Buyer and that the Head of Strategy Operations will write the recommendation memo. Priya now knows who she needs to impress and who will document the decision.

Outcome: In the meeting, Priya directs her economic framing toward the COO's priorities, makes a deliberate effort to give the Head of Strategy Operations the exact language she needs for the recommendation memo, and secures a follow-up meeting with the COO directly. The engagement is approved six weeks later — well within the typical cycle for this type of company.

COMMON MISTAKES

The 7 Most Common Research Mistakes — And How to Fix Them

Even experienced professionals fall into predictable traps when researching company decision-making structures. The mistakes below are drawn from real engagement failures — cases where professionals lost opportunities, made avoidable missteps, or invested significant time in the wrong places because their research was incomplete, biased, or poorly applied. Recognising these patterns is the first step to avoiding them.

1

❌ Mistake 1: Confusing the org chart for the power map

The Fix: Always research informal power independently of formal structure. Complete both halves of your RADAR assessment before drawing conclusions about who actually decides.

2

❌ Mistake 2: Targeting the most senior person by default

The Fix: Match your primary engagement target to the DMU role that matters most for your specific objective. Sometimes that's the Economic Buyer; sometimes it's the User Champion who will write the brief that reaches them.

3

❌ Mistake 3: Neglecting the gatekeeper

The Fix: Identify and deliberately invest in every gatekeeper. They may not say yes, but they absolutely can say no. A 15-minute investment in a Chief of Staff relationship often yields more access than months of senior-level cold outreach.

4

❌ Mistake 4: Assuming one person's view represents the organisation

The Fix: Triangulate. Speak to at least 2–3 different insiders or proxies before finalising your intelligence picture. Single-source intelligence is highly unreliable in complex organisations.

5

❌ Mistake 5: Ignoring budget and approval thresholds

The Fix: Always investigate what triggers formal approval requirements. Structure your proposal to work within the natural approval lanes — or explicitly address how you will support the approval process if your ask sits above a threshold.

6

❌ Mistake 6: Treating research as a one-time activity

The Fix: Company structures change. Leadership moves, reorgs happen, budget cycles shift. Refresh your intelligence map whenever a significant amount of time passes between engagements or when something unexpected occurs.

7

❌ Mistake 7: Failing to ask the direct question

The Fix: When appropriate, simply ask: "Can you help me understand how decisions like this typically get made here?" Most people will tell you directly and accurately. The professional fear of asking this question costs more than the question itself ever would.

SELF-EVALUATION

Self-Evaluation Sheet: How Sharp Is Your Research Skill?

Use this self-evaluation after completing your research on a company to identify where your intelligence is solid and where you have gaps to address. Rate yourself honestly — the purpose is not to judge your current capability but to focus your remaining research effort before you engage.

Research Capability	Strong ✅	Developing 🔄	Gap ❌
I can identify the decision-making archetype of any company I research			
I consistently distinguish formal authority from informal power			
I can map all four DMU roles for a company in under 60 minutes			
I understand approval thresholds and process triggers before I engage			
I can identify a company's informal power holders using public sources			
I tailor my communication approach to each stakeholder's motivation type			
I use the Power-Interest Grid to prioritise my engagement effort			
I conduct informational interviews with prepared, insight-generating questions			
I read real-time room signals and update my intelligence map during meetings			
I refresh my research when time passes or when the situation changes			

Interpreting Your Results

8–10 Strong ✅

You are operating at an advanced level. Focus on speed and consistency — applying this depth of research more quickly and habitually.

5–7 Developing 🔄

You have a solid foundation. Prioritise the specific gaps you identified and apply this guide to your next 2–3 real engagements to build muscle memory.

Under 5 ❌

You are in the learning phase — exactly where this guide is designed to help. Revisit the RADAR framework and use the worksheet for your very next professional engagement.

QUICK REFERENCE

Quick Reference: Decision-Making Research Cheat Sheet

Save this page. Bookmark it. Print it. This is your at-a-glance reference for every key concept in this guide — condensed to a single, scannable page you can return to before any engagement without re-reading the full document.

🧭 The RADAR Framework

- **R** — Research the formal structure
- **A** — Assess informal power
- **D** — Decode the decision process
- **A** — Align stakeholder motivations
- **R** — Refine with primary intelligence

👥 The 4 DMU Roles

- **Economic Buyer** — Final budget authority
- **Technical Evaluator** — Feasibility veto
- **User Champion** — Internal advocate
- **Gatekeeper** — Access and information control

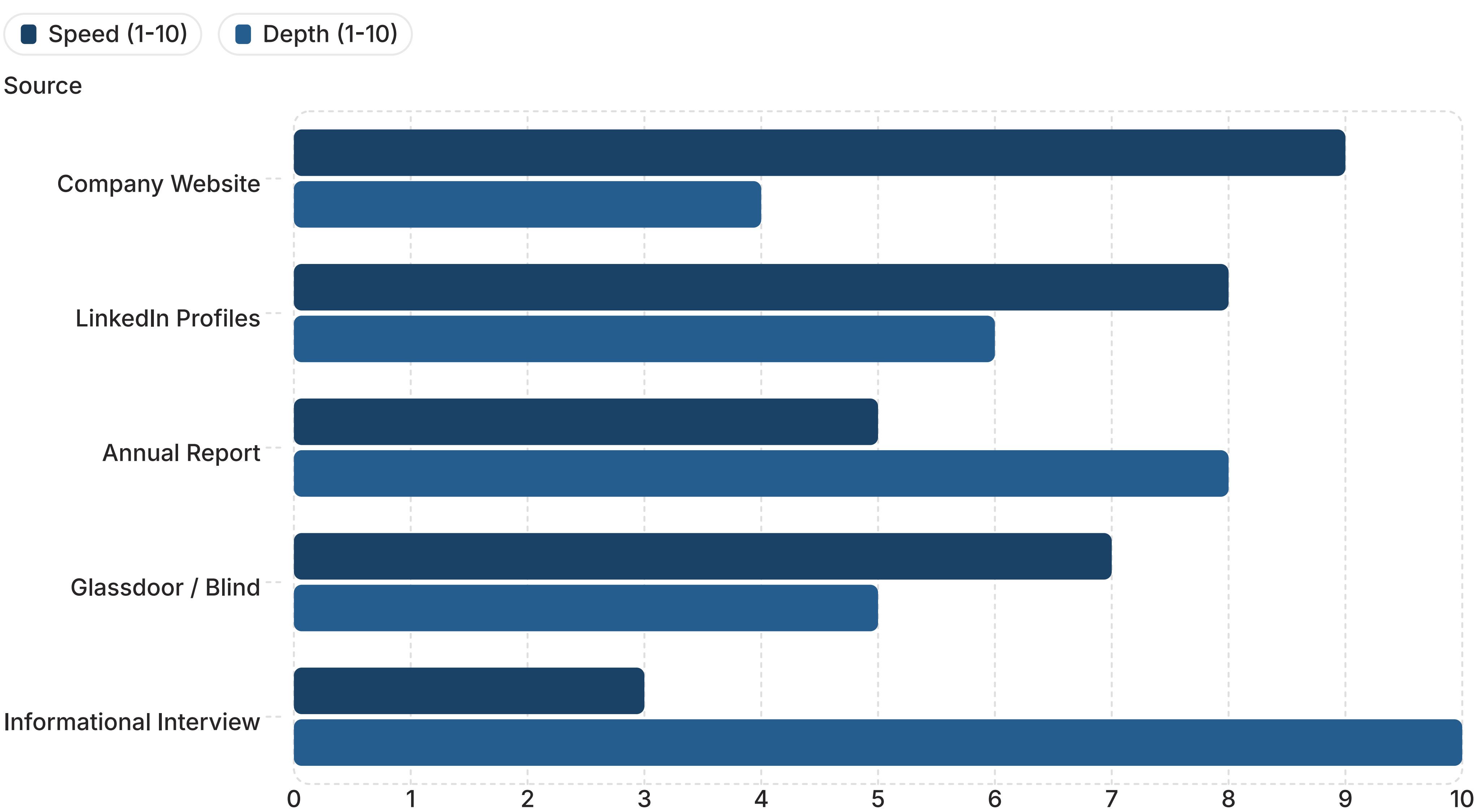
🏛️ The 4 Decision Archetypes

- **Hierarchical** — Top-down, large corporates
- **Consensus** — Broad alignment required
- **Decentralised** — Autonomous business units
- **Committee-Driven** — Cross-functional sign-off

🎯 The 4 Stakeholder Motivation Types

- **Results-Driven** — Lead with ROI and metrics
- **Risk-Averse** — Lead with references and mitigation
- **Political** — Lead with credit and visibility
- **Innovation Champion** — Lead with novelty and differentiation

Top 5 Research Sources by Speed vs. Depth



SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

Key Takeaways & Your Next 3 Actions

You now have a complete system for researching and decoding any company's decision-making structure. The following takeaways capture the most important ideas from this guide — read them as a confidence check before your next engagement.

Org charts and power maps are not the same thing

Always research both the formal structure and the informal power network. The person who decides is not always the most senior person in the room.

The RADAR framework is your repeatable research system

Apply it consistently — Research, Assess, Decode, Align, Refine — and you will arrive at every engagement better prepared than the competition.

Every decision-making unit has four distinct roles

Economic Buyer, Technical Evaluator, User Champion, Gatekeeper. You need a strategy for each, not just the most senior person.

Motivation mapping is what separates competent from exceptional

Understanding what each stakeholder is optimising for — their personal success metric, not just the company's — is the empathy layer that makes your engagement land.

Process knowledge is as important as people knowledge

Knowing who decides is not enough. You need to know how the decision gets made, what triggers formal approval, and what "yes" looks like in this specific organisation.

Research is a habit, not a one-time event

Refresh your intelligence map regularly. Organisations change. Leadership moves. Budget cycles shift. What was true six months ago may not be true today.

The informational interview remains your most powerful tool

Desk research has limits. A single well-prepared conversation with the right insider fills gaps that no amount of secondary research can close. Invest in it.

Your Next 3 Actions — Starting Today

Action 1: Pick One Company

Choose one organisation you are currently engaging with — or planning to — and run a full RADAR assessment. Use the worksheet in this guide. Give yourself 90 minutes.

Action 2: Map the DMU

For that company, identify at least one person for each of the four DMU roles. Note what you don't know — those gaps are your research to-do list for the next 48 hours.

Action 3: Request One Conversation

Identify one insider or proxy who can validate your research and fill in your intelligence gaps. Send a connection request or a brief, respectful note requesting a 20-minute call.

🚀 **Remember:** The professionals who consistently win — in interviews, in sales, in consulting, in internal politics — are not always the smartest or the most experienced. They are the most prepared. This guide has given you the system. Now it's on you to use it.