COMPANION RESOURCE / PRINTABLE + FILLABLE

Structural Clarity Toolkit

Companion to it’s not the people.

One real situation. A visible decision. A review.

Work through one recurring decision and leave with a clearer ownership arrangement, a bounded test, and a brief you can take to a leadership meeting.

How to use this file

Use one case throughout. Read the worked example, complete the numbered tools, then prepare your one-page brief. Print and write, or type in the form fields. Keep a dated copy before making changes.

Working route

1. Bring One Real Situation
2. Compensation and Friction Log
3. Current-State Decision Map
4. Pattern-and-Evidence Review
5. Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Tool 5 includes the Structural Clarity Brief, a one-page summary for a leadership meeting, and Return Visit: What Changed?, to complete after the change has been used.

Contact

For deeper engagement: engagements@lenthomas.studio

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READ BEFORE COMPLETING THE TOOLS

Start here

Make the work concrete

Select a situation you can examine with recent evidence. Do not try to diagnose an entire organization in one sitting. Invite the people who do the work and those who can authorize changes.

Separate evidence from interpretation

Record what happened, the source, and the date. Label assumptions. An unknown is a valid answer when you also name who will investigate it and what must wait.

Protect people and information

Use role labels and anonymized examples. Keep completed files in an organization-approved location. Do not enter confidential personal or client information. Your answers stay with you, saved on your own device.

Use the fields deliberately

Download and save a local copy. Use a PDF reader that supports forms. Save, close, and reopen to check your entries before relying on them. For longer answers, use the continuation page near the end of this file; text that scrolls inside a box may not all print.

Do not turn completion into certification

These are reflection and decision-support tools, not validated assessments, legal advice, or proof of safety or compliance. Seek qualified review where the situation requires it.

Finish with a test, not a promise

Name the decision, owner, evidence, next action, and review date. Revisit the work after the arrangement has been used. To repeat a page for additional evidence or cases, download a fresh copy of this file.

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ILLUSTRATIVE - NOT A CLIENT CASE

Worked example: the situation

1 / Bring One Real Situation

In this fictional example, three recent pricing exceptions returned to the CEO after Sales, Finance, and Operations disagreed about approval. The team wants routine exceptions resolved within delegated boundaries, without committing unsupported delivery work.

2 / Compensation and Friction Log

The CEO settles disputes privately. Sales checks informally before using its stated authority. Operations discovers delivery promises after negotiation. The team will review exception records and ask each function how the process actually works; repeated escalation alone does not prove the cause.

3 / Current-State Decision Map

Sales negotiates; Finance validates margin; Operations checks feasibility. No one can identify a shared margin floor, the final owner within limits, or what requires escalation. Written role descriptions and actual approvals disagree.

4 / Pattern-and-Evidence Review

Working explanation: boundaries and required input are unclear. Alternatives include missing financial information or disregard of an existing policy. The team checks the policy and decision records before selecting a remedy. If a clear rule was knowingly bypassed, behavior also needs attention.

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ILLUSTRATIVE - CONDITIONS ARE NOT UNIVERSAL RULES

Worked example: the arrangement

5 / Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Sales will decide within a margin range approved by the authorized leadership team. Finance validates the margin method; Operations confirms any change to delivery scope before commitment. Proposals outside delegated limits go to the named executive owner. Exact limits must be set by the organization.

Evidence and review

Test on the next five relevant exceptions, then review within 30 days even if fewer occur. Record elapsed time, escalations and their reasons, margin results, delivery changes, and participant feedback. Compare with five prior comparable cases; note differences in complexity.

What could stop the test?

Pause if a customer commitment exceeds confirmed capacity or a required approval is bypassed. The executive owner decides the interim route. Faster decisions alone do not count as improvement if delivery or margin deteriorates.

A fictional review outcome

Four of five exceptions followed the agreed path; one escalated correctly. One delivery check arrived late. The team keeps the ownership arrangement but assigns a backup Operations reviewer. These are demonstration results, not promised outcomes.

What a brief should communicate

Pricing exceptions; unclear boundaries supported by decision records; Sales authority within defined limits; Finance and Operations input; executive escalation outside limits; a small test; named review owner; unresolved backup coverage.

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TOOL 1 / PART I

1. Bring One Real Situation

Choose a recurring decision, not a broad complaint.

Case reference and contributors

Name the situation, record owner, participating roles, date, and version.

What happened?

Describe a recent example: decision, sequence, effect, and evidence source.

What do you currently believe explains it?

Separate observed facts, interpretations, and what you do not know.

What would improve?

Define a visible outcome, scope boundary, and who would notice the difference.

Before moving on: Could someone unfamiliar with the situation identify the specific decision?

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TOOL 2 / PART I

2. Compensation and Friction Log

Record extra work that keeps the situation moving. To add more examples, download a fresh copy of this file.

Workaround and trigger

What extra step occurs, how often, and following what event?

Who absorbs it, and what does it cost?

Name roles, time or delay, displaced work, and effects on people; label estimates.

Evidence and benefit

Record dated examples and sources. What legitimate purpose might this extra step serve?

What would be exposed without it?

Identify the gap, alternative explanation, evidence still needed, and investigator.

Before moving on: Is this unnecessary rescue, necessary coordination, or something not yet understood?

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TOOL 3 / PART II

3. Current-State Decision Map

Part A: Current Practice

Describe actual practice before proposing a new structure.

Decision and final authority

Define the trigger and decision. Who formally decides? Who actually makes the final call?

Input, approval, and implementation

Who provides advice, who can block action, who executes, and who owns the result?

Information and sequence

What information is required, who validates it, and how does the decision move?

Escalation and informal override

What moves upward, to whom, why, and who can reverse the decision in practice?

Before moving on: Where do participants give different answers? Record the difference rather than forcing agreement.

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TOOL 3 / PART II

3. Current-State Decision Map

Part B: Gaps and Unresolved Questions

Compare accounts and document what remains unresolved.

Formal versus actual practice

List the most consequential mismatch and evidence for both accounts.

Capacity and authority

Does the owner have resources, information, competence, and sufficient authority?

System participation

Does software or AI recommend, route, approve, or execute any step? Who checks it?

Questions needing a decision

Name each unresolved boundary, the authorized resolver, and what must wait.

Before moving on: What do you say is delegated that still needs your unofficial approval?

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TOOL 4 / PARTS III-IV

4. Pattern-and-Evidence Review

Use the book’s patterns as lenses, not a scoring system.

Working explanation

Name the observed pattern and connect it to specific evidence. More than one pattern may apply.

Alternatives and disconfirming evidence

Could capability, conduct, workload, missing resources, or external conditions explain this? What would change your mind?

People and consequences

Whose work or influence changes? Who has not been heard? What could your explanation unfairly overlook?

Decision on what to examine or change

State what is supported, what remains uncertain, who investigates, and why this issue takes priority.

Before moving on: What evidence would show that this is not primarily a structural problem?

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TOOL 5 / PART V

5. Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Part A: Agree the Revised Arrangement

Do not change delegated authority without approval from the person entitled to grant it.

Decision owner and result owner

Name final authority, implementation owner, expected result, and approving leader.

Required input and boundaries

Specify information, consultations, resources, permitted scope, and limits before action.

Escalation, override, and response

Define trigger, recipient, response timing, interim action, and how overrides are recorded.

Communicate the change

Who needs to know? What old approval stops? What must you personally stop doing?

Before moving on: Can participants explain the arrangement in the same way, including exceptions?

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TOOL 5 / PART V

5. Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Part B: Design a Bounded Test

Choose a test small enough to examine and consequential enough to teach you something.

Scope and authorization

Specify decisions included, exclusions, start/end, test owner, and authorization.

Baseline and evidence

Record current conditions and sources. Define measures for speed, quality, burden, and unintended effects.

Pause and fallback

Name stop conditions, who can pause, who responds, and the safe interim decision route.

Review commitment

Set the date, participants, evidence owner, success criteria, and what happens if too few cases occur.

Before moving on: Could the change appear faster while simply shifting work or risk to someone else?

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TOOL 5 / ONE-PAGE LEADERSHIP OUTPUT

Structural Clarity Brief

A summary output of Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Summarize the work for a leadership meeting. This brief is not an approval by itself.

Situation and evidence

Case reference, date/version, specific decision, evidence, and working explanation.

Proposed arrangement

Final authority, required input, outcome ownership, boundaries, and escalation.

Test and review

Scope, approving leader, test owner, measures, stop conditions, and review date.

Decision needed now

State the request, unresolved questions, next action, owner, and due date.

Before moving on: Can someone use this brief without needing the full conversation?

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TOOL 5 / REVIEW, NOT A COMPLETION SCORE

Return Visit: What Changed?

Part of Decision Redesign, Test, and Review

Complete after actual use. To review again, download a fresh copy of this file.

What happened?

Record cases, dates, evidence, and differences from the baseline; do not invent precision.

What improved or became harder?

Examine quality, speed, burden, escalation, and effects on people; include disagreement.

What did you learn?

Compare the original explanation with findings. What remains uncertain or needs specialist input?

Continue, modify, pause, or stop?

Record the decision, rationale, authorized owner, communication, next action, and next review.

Before moving on: What would you do differently if you were starting this case again?

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CONTINUATION PAGE

Continuation page

Use this page when an answer needs more room than its box.

Which tool and prompt does this continue?

Continued answer

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INDEPENDENT USE / OPTIONAL SUPPORT

When deeper engagement may help

Use the tools independently

The toolkit is complete for independent use and free to use from the first page.

Recognize the boundary

Consider facilitated support when leaders cannot agree on authority, a change redistributes power, evidence remains contested, or people do not feel able to raise concerns. A worksheet cannot itself grant authority, resolve misconduct, or substitute for fair performance management.

Work with Len Thomas

For consulting, leadership coaching, facilitated conversations, or speaking inquiries, contact Len Thomas directly.

engagements@lenthomas.studio

Send a brief description and relevant timing. Do not email confidential employee, customer, or client information.

Resources

https://lenthomas.studio/its-not-the-people

Keep a dated copy of your completed record. Repeat the process when circumstances change; completion is not a permanent approval.

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