

DECISION FREE SOLUTIONS

MAKING EXPERTISE MATTER.



ARTICLE

DECISION FREE SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCING THE APPROACH OF DECISION FREE SOLUTIONS

– Resolve Frustrations. Utilise
Expertise. Free Up Resources.
Make Change Happen.

Introducing the Approach of Decision Free Solutions

— *Resolve frustrations. Utilise expertise. Free up resources. Make change happen.*

Introduction and management summary

Organisations are successful when they achieve their organisational goals at minimal risk, using minimal resources. Each successful organisation does so in its own way. But to be successful always comes down to *having the conditions in place to optimally utilise available expertise*.

In achieving desired outcomes organisations constantly have to make choices. The approach of Decision Free Solutions (DFS) identifies that there are only two types of choices to be made: choices which *increase the risk* the desired outcome will *not* be achieved (or only using many more resources than minimally required), and choices which *don't increase this risk*.

The latter type of choice is made by experts. To them, in their field of expertise, what needs to be done is obvious, and, in fact, no longer involves a choice. Which leaves organisations with the choices which are not fully substantiated, and which *do* increase risk. Organisations have a special word for this type of choice. They call it a decision.

Recently, in recognition of an increasingly dynamic world, different approaches to decision making have been proposed: from traditional “hierarchical decision making” to shared, consent-based, distributed, integrative or pushed-down decision making. In all instances, to reduce the inherent risk associated with decisions, more relevant expertise is brought into the decision making process.

DFS, based on a clarified definition of what a “decision” actually is, sets out to systematically *minimise* 1) decision making and 2) the risks associated with them. DFS achieves this *by creating the conditions to fully utilise available expertise*. For this, two central challenges have to be overcome:

- The prevalence of all types of decision making hampering the use of expertise (hierarchical, and as found in rules, procedures, protocols, checklists and contracts)
- Ensuring the clear communication between experts and non-experts to prevent mechanisms of control and decision making kicking in

DFS provides *guidelines* — by way of four steps ([DICE](#)), five principles ([TONNNO](#)) and the role of the [Decision Free Leader](#) — to *systematically* utilise all available expertise to achieve desired outcomes. These guidelines can be used to improve existing operational methods and philosophies (e.g., Agile, Holacracy, “self-management,” the existing “modus operandi”), or to device new ones.

DFS's motto is “Resolve frustrations, Utilise expertise, Free up resources, Make change happen”. DFS doesn't prescribe what it is you have to do (and how), DFS guides you and tells you what to pay attention to along the way. Implementing DFS is an antidote to the fragility, the madness, the wasted resources, the many frustrations — from lack of autonomy, trust and freedom, to the grievances of racism and discrimination — and the risk involved in how most systems and organisations operate.

As DFS is a wholly logical approach, it requires no assumptions, no leap of faith, no degree in semantics, no contracts, no special training — and it is entirely for free. DFS puts expertise, and thus people and their well-being, central. DFS is where “the new way of working” begins.

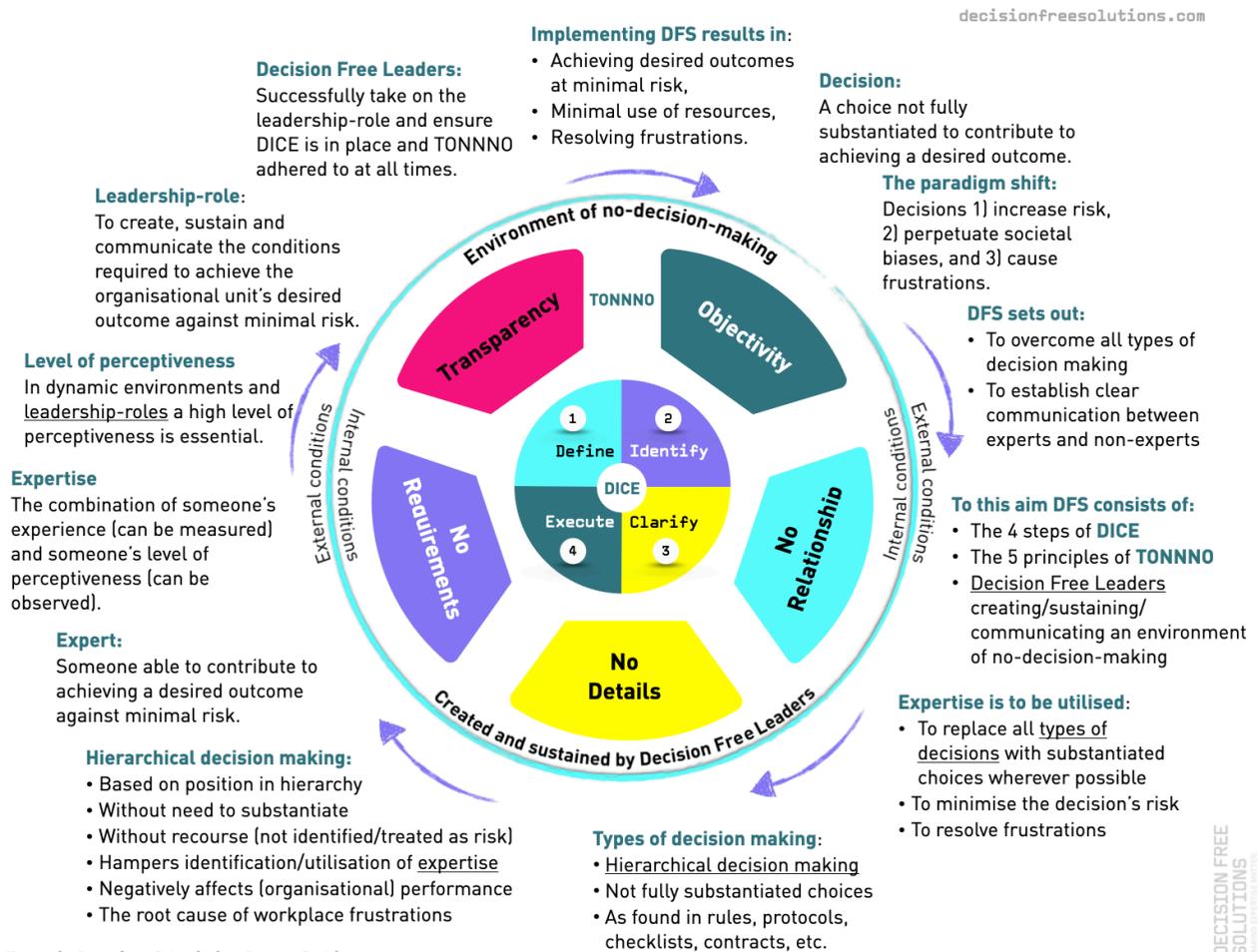
About this document

In the following chapters it is explained 1) what the unique elements of DFS are, 2) how utilising expertise is linked to resolving frustrations, freeing up resources and making change happen (what DFS is for), 3) how DFS clarifies the concepts of “decisions” and “expertise”, and how individual an organisational performance can be predicted, 4) what the DFS guidelines consist of (DICE, TONNNO, DFL), 5) which organisations will benefit from implementing from DFS, 6) how to implement DFS based on the organisation’s context, 7) what it takes to realise its benefits, and 8) a brief summary of several examples of “DFS in action”. The final section provides examples of verifiable predictions DFS makes with respect to “organisational performance” and “leadership”. A graphical summary of the approach is provided in Figure 1.

The Approach of Decision Free Solutions

Resolve frustrations, Utilise expertise, Free up resources, Make change happen

A generic and systematic approach, providing guidelines for new and existing methods to utilise all available expertise to achieve desired outcomes



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Figure 1. Graphical summary of the approach of Decision Free Solutions.

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What makes the approach of DFS unique?

To optimally utilise available [expertise](#) is not a new goal. There are a number of existing approaches and management philosophies that have a similar or identical aim. But none of these approaches is built on a [paradigm shift](#) on how to approach decision making.

Through the mere clarification of a single word — decision — DFS is not only able to *explain* the success of a range of both pioneering organisations and existing methodologies, but also to *provide suggestions* for further improvements [10]. Through this new perspective, and simply by following the logic, DFS is able to unlock an organisation's full potential, and offer new powerful insights when it comes to predicting performance, leadership, and even through which mechanisms racism and discrimination enter organisations [5,6,12].

The approach of Decision Free Solutions' many unique elements are a direct result of "decision making" playing such a pivotal role in achieving organisational success, and the power of language itself (as it is through language that we — quite literally¹ — see the world).

The following is unique to the approach of Decision Free Solutions :

- DFS' starting premise is making a rigorous distinction between choices which increase risk (decisions), and choices which don't. As the latter aren't technically decisions, it proposes a paradigm shift: decisions need to be avoided, replaced, minimised.
- As decision making not only increases risk but is also affected by (societal) biases, implementing DFS not only improves performance, but also resolves (workplace) frustrations from lack of autonomy, trust and freedom to the grievances of racism and discrimination.
- The approach of DFS is both logical, generic and systematic:
 - It can be implemented in any field, at any level, at any scale, both gradually and reversibly (from organisations to management to procurement to sales to birthing to whatever)
 - Without the need for courses, certificates or contracts or having to buy into multiple programs requiring constant clarification by costly consultants
 - Without requiring a restructuring, a reorganisation, the immediate and full departure of current practices or an adherence to pre-cooked policies, procedures and templates
 - Without demanding a leap of faith or relying on "experimentation" — if you see the logic you can go and run with it at a pace of your own choosing
- DFS can be used to both develop new methods as well as to improve existing ones, offering logic and guidelines to arrive at a method, approach or procedure which is best suited to achieve the desired outcome within a given environment — logic and guidelines which allow any change or (cultural) transformation to be sustainable
- DFS allows for the identification of both (non-)expert individuals and organisations through the observation of behavioural characteristics, and therefore for the prediction of (non-)performance.
- DFS — because of its "decision making paradigm shift," and its ability to identify expertise (and thus predict performance) by observation — is a unique and powerful tool for research in a vast range of fields (e.g. organisations, management, leadership, "new way of working")

¹ The members of the Namibian Himba tribe — who speak a language that has no separate word for "blue" — famously take noticeably longer to identify a single blue square among many green ones. <https://burnaway.org/blue-language-visual-perception/>

What is the approach of Decision Free Solutions for?

Decision Free Solutions is a generic and systematic approach, providing guidelines for new and existing methods to utilise all available expertise to achieve desired outcomes

The approach of DFS is generic: It can be applied in any situation where assistance is required to achieve a particular desired outcome. By optimally utilising expertise the approach aims to fully achieve this desired outcome, and to do so at minimal risk.

The approach of DFS is systematic: it is built on logic and the clear definition of terminology which is of central importance. This logic can be used to develop new methods from the ground up (e.g. in [organisations](#), [management](#), [procurement](#), [sales](#), [healthcare](#), [birthing](#)), but it can also be used to critically assess (and improve) existing methodologies and ways of working.

The approach of DFS offers guidelines: it consists out of four steps ([DICE](#)), five principles ([TONNNO](#)) and the concept of the "[Decision Free Leader](#)".

Resolve frustration, Utilise expertise,
Free up resources, Make change happen

The motto of the approach of Decision Free Solutions is: Resolve frustration, Utilise expertise, Free up resources, Make change happen:

- By creating the conditions to optimally utilising expertise a wide range of frustrations can be resolved. Not only the frustration of not achieving the desired outcome — or achieving it using many more resources than required — but also the frustrations felt by those whose expertise is not (fully) utilised. These frustrations range from lack of autonomy, responsibility, freedom, trust and fun, to the grievances of discrimination and racism [12]. DFS, focussing on utilising expertise, is a *human-centred approach*.
- Through the utilisation of expertise desired outcomes can be achieved more efficiently, and at minimal risk — and thus using the minimal amount of resources.
- The combination of non-ambiguous desired outcomes and clear communication between experts and non-experts does away with the need for a costly system of control ("overhead"). This system of control is a logical reflex to minimise risks when desired outcomes are not transparent and expertise is not identified and utilised. In absence of this need for control significant amounts of resources can be freed up.
- Through the combination of *minimising* the need for resources to achieve a particular desired outcome, and *freeing up* resources by reducing overhead, DFS contributes to removing a critical bottleneck — sufficient resources — in making change happen.

The starting premise of the approach of Decision Free Solutions is that a distinction must be made between decisions which increase risk, and decisions which don't. DFS sets out to utilise expertise to either *replace* decisions with substantiated choices, or to *minimise* the risk associated with those which cannot be avoided. This remaining risk is to be considered for risk management.

Implementing DFS in any field (e.g., procurement), or any system (e.g., organisations), results in a shift *away* from decision making, risk and all of its related consequences, and *towards* improved

performance in actually achieving desired outcomes, and the resolution of a range of frustrations (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Implementing the approach of Decision Free Solutions results in a shift or transformation away from decision making, risk and frustrations.

Decision making, expertise and their complex relationship

On decision making and what a “decision” actually is

An entire industry of academic research, consultancy and publishing — focussed on leadership, management and organisational performance — sees “decision making” as the heart of the organisation. It is what pumps everything else around.

Yet, at the same time, it treats the word “decision” as a catch-all term, regardless of context, meaning and consequence. It fails to make a distinction between decisions involving a choice, and what are merely “acknowledgements,” “approvals” or “go-aheads”. Between decisions which are simply non-consequential choices, and decisions which directly affect the achievement of a desired outcome.

The uniqueness of the approach of DFS stems from the clarified definition of a single word: “decision”. This clarified definition results in a paradigm shift, providing a new powerful perspective on how to achieve organisational success and resolve frustrations.

A distinction is to be made between choices which increase risk, and those which don't

Organisations are successful when they achieve their desired outcomes at minimal risk, using the minimal amount of resources. In achieving desired outcomes the organisation constantly has to make choices. DFS identifies two types of choices: choices which *increase the risk* the desired outcome will not be achieved (or only using many more resources than minimally required), and choices which *don't increase this risk*.

The latter type of choice is made by experts. Experts are able to substantiate why what needs to be done next. To them, in their field of expertise, the situation is transparent. What needs to be done is obvious, and, in fact, no longer involves a choice. In an organisational context, choices which don't increase risk aren't in need of anything, except, perhaps, an approval or a go-ahead.

Organisations have a special word for choices which increase risk

Which leaves organisations with the choices which *do* increase risk. Organisations have a special word for this type of choice which is not fully substantiated to contribute to achieve a desired outcome. They call it a decision.

Instead of seeing “decision making” as life's oxygen — a strength, a token of power, an earned right, an indication of boldness and incisiveness, a skill, an organisational necessity, “the way of running things” — DFS identifies decisions as increasing risk. Consequently, DFS proposes a paradigm shift on decision making, because the existing dominant paradigm is failing our societies, our organisations, and the people operating within them. It is failing us because it stands in the way of utilising our skills, talents and motivation.

The dominant paradigm on decision making is not only failing us, it is also illogical. Following from the dictionary definition of what a “decision” is — a conclusion or resolution arrived at after careful

thought² — it immediately follows that the situation in which the decision is to be made is not fully transparent. At least not to the person who has to make a decision: if the situation had been transparent, no careful thought would have been required.

It can thus be concluded that a decision is a special type of choice: *a choice not fully substantiated to contribute to achieving a desired outcome* [1,2].

The clarification of what a “decision” is results in a new perspective which is spectacularly powerful

It is argued that this is a much needed *clarification* of the word decision, and not a *redefinition*. But either way, what is key in an organisational context — in *any* context where something needs to be achieved — is to have a common understanding of the meaning of the word “decision”. This is a pre-requisite in order to be able to make a distinction between choices which increase risk (a.k.a. decisions), and those which don't.

The clarification of what a “decision” is results in a new perspective which is spectacularly powerful in explaining both the performance and non-performance of organisations and the role of leadership throughout the organisation. This clarification immediately results in the following observations:

- Decisions increase risk (as they are choices which are not fully substantiated)
- Decisions arise in absence of transparency (e.g. when a situation is too complex/dynamic)
- Decisions arise in absence of expertise (to whom a situation would be transparent)
- Decisions arise in absence of non-ambiguous desired outcomes (making it impossible to fully substantiate the choices to be made)
- Decisions can be found also in rules, procedures, protocols, checklists and contracts — in anything containing choices which can no longer be substantiated to contribute to today's desired outcome
- Hierarchical decision making — where someone based on the position in the hierarchy is entitled to make choices which don't have to be substantiated, and which may not be contested — is both a source of organisational risk as well as frustration.

Decisions increase risk and perpetuate (societal) biases

Decisions not merely increase risk, however, they also perpetuate (societal) biases. The human brain makes use of a long list of biases to make sense of the world around us. These biases are at work when making a decision. Even knowing these biases exist is of little help. Humans are incapable of recognising their own biases: the errors in the judgements we make are intuitive [3,4]. Whereas expertise sees no colour, gender, form, name, title or religion, *societal biases do*. Consequently, it is through the mechanism of decision making that organisations allow racism and discrimination into their organisation [12].

Consequently, recognising that “decision” can be substituted with “a choice not fully substantiated to contribute to achieving a desired outcomes,” DFS' logic results in the following statements:

² A combination of the Concise Oxford Dictionary definitions of “decision” and “consideration” (used in the definition of “decision”).

1. Decisions increase risk and perpetuate societal biases — causing frustration and poor performance
2. Expertise is to be identified and utilised to provide as full a substantiation as possible, for as many choices as possible — thereby both minimising the number of decisions as well as the associated risks of those decisions which cannot be avoided
3. Decisions which cannot be avoided are to be identified, and their associated risk is to be considered for subsequent risk management.

But...

Decisions aren't the problem, we all make numerous small and big decisions throughout the day!

We make numerous choices during the day, which may be fully substantiated or not. Those which are not fully substantiated (a.k.a. decisions) may be associated with a small or a larger risk (of not contributing to achieving the outcome we are hoping for).

If decisions really increase risk, we would know by now!

Not everything we call a "decision" falls under the dictionary definition of a decision and as clarified in DFS. The fact that a decision increases risk doesn't mean this risk will also materialise (the decision — although not fully substantiated — may still contribute to achieving the desired outcome). The risk may also materialise a long time after the decision was made, and a link with a decision may therefore no longer be made.

Which "decisions" aren't actually decisions?

If a decision is fully substantiated to contribute to a desired outcome, it merely becomes the obvious and logical next step: there simply is no "choice" to be made anymore (doing something else on purpose would be sabotage). Many "decisions" are in fact formal approvals or go-aheads. Other "decisions" — e.g. those made in absence of a desired outcome — are mere "choices" (e.g., picking a colour in a board game).

Decisions aren't actually the problem, the problem is how they are made!

If you let experts make the decisions, then they may end up "avoiding" decisions by fully substantiating their proposals. If they can't fully substantiate the choices made, then, as they are experts, they will at least minimise the associated risks. How decisions get made is, indeed, crucial. But decisions still increase risk (and are the problem).

Expertise is the ability to minimise risk

That expertise is to be optimally utilised is an open door. Expertise allows (many more) choices to be substantiated (avoiding decisions), and thus minimises the risk the desired outcome will not be achieved. Also when decisions cannot be avoided, which is often the case, experts are still best positioned to make these decisions — they will *minimise the risk* associated with these decisions.

At the same time it is "decision making" which often stands in the way of both identifying and utilising expertise — in the form of hierarchical decision making, and as found in rules, procedures, protocols, checklists and contracts.

Utilising expertise minimises decision making,
decision making hampers the utilisation of expertise

This results in the situation — as found in many organisations — where expertise is to be utilised to minimise decision making, but decision making itself is hampering the utilisation of expertise.

The approach of DFS sets out to create the conditions to optimally utilise expertise. To do so it must be clear what is meant with “expertise,” and what it takes to become an “expert” (to be distinguished from becoming a “specialist,” see shaded box below).

In DFS expertise is defined as “the ability to contribute to achieving a goal at minimal risk”. Expertise consists of the combination of someone’s experience and someone’s level of perceptiveness — where “perceptiveness” is the ability to discern and understand the interrelated dynamics of a situation (and key in learning from situations and rapidly building expertise) [5].

The more dynamic the environment, the greater the importance of someone’s “level of perceptiveness”

In environments which are static, expertise is gained predominantly through experience. The more dynamic the environment, however, the greater the importance of perceptiveness becomes [6].

“Experience” is something that, generally, is easy to quantify. It is often measured in the number of times or years someone acted in a particular environment with a particular responsibility. “Level of perceptiveness” — which to all intents and purposes is a personal trait — can’t be measured, but it can be readily assessed through observation.

Someone’s level of perceptiveness — someone’s (in)ability to see connections, to recognise how circumstance impacts outcome, to feel and take responsibility for what we do or fail to do — seeps through in everything someone does. It determines someone’s core values, the way they live their lives, and their behavioural characteristics.

As a range of behavioural characteristics can be linked to either a very low or very high level of perceptiveness, the observation of some of these characteristics implies that many other, related, and more difficult to observe characteristics may be readily presumed. Examples of this — both for individuals and for organisations — are provided in the [Appendix](#).

Crucially, as a high level of perceptiveness is required to be/become an expert in dynamic environments — which applies to both individuals and organisations — observing a range of characteristics (as listed in Table 2 and Table 3) allows one to predict someone’s or some organisation’s (potential for) performance.

In the approach of Decision Free Solutions someone’s level of perceptiveness plays a pivotal role in the identification of someone’s ability to minimise risk in dynamic environments and in leadership-roles. The ability to *predict performance based on observations* is key.

Two final notes on expertise: One, expertise is colourless, genderless, and has no title, form, age or religion. This is how the identification and utilisation of expertise decisively contributes to the resolution of frustrations and grievances. Two, a focus on expertise is a focus on people. A key element in utilising expertise is an environment which is both safe and motivating. Allowing people to utilise their expertise is motivating in itself, but organisations can and should do much more.

But...

Everyone who has a lot of experience automatically becomes an expert!

This statement is only true in environments which are very stable and thus provide someone with a lot of opportunity to become an expert (e.g., a brick layer). A lot of experience may also result in someone becoming a “specialist”. A specialist has a lot of in-depth detailed knowledge in a particular field. An expert, however, is defined by his/her ability to minimise risk in achieving a desired outcome. Whenever an environment is at least somewhat dynamic (as it is in leadership-roles), someone’s “level of perceptiveness” plays an important role. Experience usually does too, but only if it goes hand-in-hand with a high level of perceptiveness.

I am a specialist with a high level of perceptiveness!

A high level of perceptiveness will help greatly in becoming a specialist. A specialist with a high level of perceptiveness is also at risk of eventually getting bored and dissatisfied with his/her specialism (over time there may be less to observe and understand to satisfy curiosity). For very perceptive people their specialism can, in fact, become a trap.

Our organisations prefers to hire generalists, not experts

In DFS this statement would be rephrased as follows: Our organisation prefers to hire those who are able to minimise risk in a range of circumstances (“generalists”), not specialists. Or: Our organisations prefers to hire people with a high level of perceptiveness, not specialists. Hiring people with a high level of perceptiveness is always wise, as they have a high potential to take on leadership-roles and to minimise risk in very dynamic environments. If an organisation provides few challenges and ends up controlling them, they are also the first to leave the organisation.

The two central challenges which must be overcome

Having clarified what a “decision” is, and defined what is meant with “expertise,” it follows that the utilisation of expertise will either *replace* decisions with substantiated choices, or *minimise the risk* associated with decisions.

However, *decision making itself* also stands in the way of identifying and utilising expertise. This is the first central challenge which DFS is to overcome.

The second central challenge concerns communication between experts and non-experts (often experts in something else). In absence of clear communication:

- It is near-impossible (for the non-expert) to identify expertise
- The non-expert can’t be certain the “expert” will indeed achieve the desired outcome
- The non-expert — left in the blind — can’t be blamed for perceiving risk and fall back to mechanisms of control (including decision making) to manage that risk

Thus, to optimally utilise expertise DFS sets out:

- To overcome all forms of decision making preventing the use of expertise (hierarchical, and as found in rules, procedures, protocols, checklists and contracts)
- To establish clear communication between experts and non-experts to prevent (the felt need for) mechanisms of control and decision making

To achieve this the approach of Decision Free Solutions introduces the four steps of DICE, the five principles of TONNNO, and the concept of the Decision Free Leader.

DICE, TONNNO, and the Decision Free Leader

The four steps of DICE

The logic of the four steps of DICE [7] is the following:

- It must be transparent what needs to be achieved to begin with.
- Next the expertise which can achieve this desired outcome is to be identified.
- This identified expertise is then to clarify how it will go about achieving the desired outcome.
- When working towards it, this identified expertise is to communicate progress, as well as any deviations from what was clarified (and how it will be remedied).

The four steps of DICE are Definition, Identification, Clarification and Execution (see Figure 3).

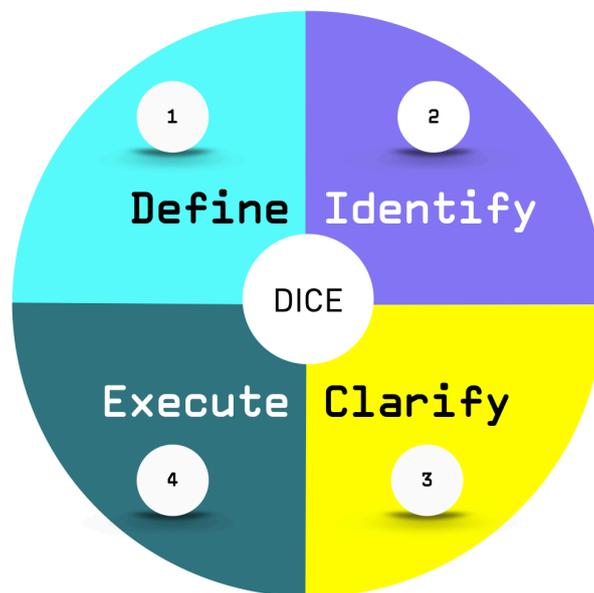


Figure 3. The four steps of DICE.

Definition — In the Definition step the desired outcome is to be defined, along with the conditions internal and external) of the environment in which this outcome is to be achieved (and in which “domain” these conditions lie). Both are to be understood the same by all involved. The Definition step forms the basis for the identification of the expert. Desired outcomes are often “nested,” where e.g., the desired outcome of a task is to be aligned with that of a team and that of an organisation. Desired outcomes can also be hidden and unintended, e.g., in the form of incentives or periodic targets, affecting how choices are made.

Identification — Based on the description of the desired outcome and the environment, the expert who is able to achieve the desired outcome is to be identified. This identification is usually done through a combination of the expert’s experience (past performances and ability to substantiate the relevance of his/her expertise in achieving the outcome) as well as level of perceptiveness

(observation of behavioural characteristics in line with the level of perceptiveness required in the environment (more or less dynamic)).

Clarification — The identified expert explains the activities (e.g., by way of a plan), from beginning to end (avoiding details), and clarifies this plan to the point that it is transparent also to the non-expert that the desired outcome will be achieved. Only when the plan is made sufficiently transparent will the expert execute the plan. Plans which are not fully transparent either include decisions (e.g., because expertise is lacking), or may eventually invoke decisions (e.g., through mechanisms of control).

Execution — The expert executes the plan, and periodically informs the non-expert from any deviations to the plan, how these may have an effect on the desired outcome, and how these effects will be mitigated. In absence of periodic communication the non-expert will begin to perceive risk, which it is likely to want to manage through mechanisms of control.

To ensure clear communication and to avoid decision making during any of the four steps of DICE the five principles known as TONNNO need to be adhered to at all times.

The five principles of TONNNO

The five principles of TONNNO [8] are defined to establish a clear communication between experts and non-experts and to avoid decision making.

The five principles are Transparency, Objectivity, No details, No requirements and No relationship. A brief explanation for each is provided in Table 1. In Figure 4 these five principles “surround” the four steps of DICE — they are to be observed at all times.

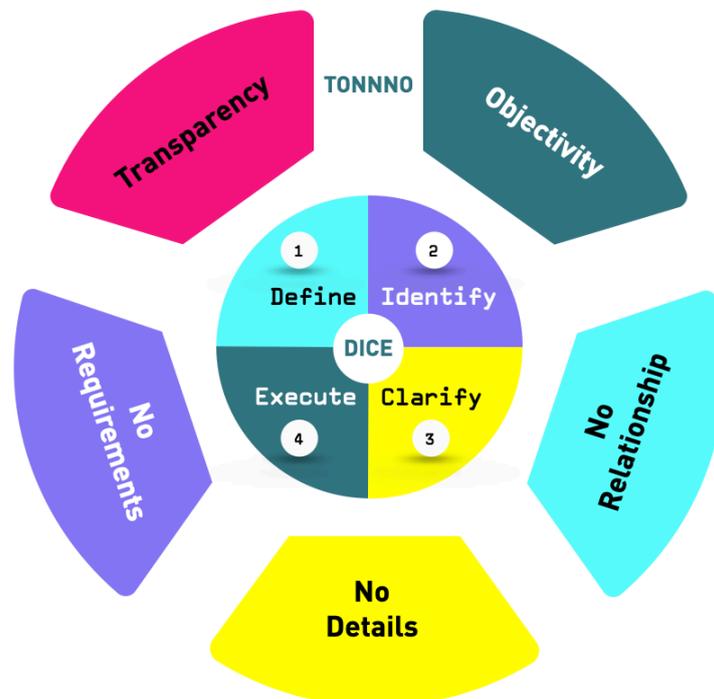


Figure 4. The five principles of TONNNO are to be observed at all times.

| Principle | Brief explanation |
|------------------------|--|
| Transparency | Whatever is communicated is to be transparent. It is to be understood in the same way by everyone taking part in the communication. That what is communicated is to be obvious, easy to understand, non-ambiguous and absent of jargon. Simplicity is key. This is most readily achieved through the use of metrics, the language of transparency. <u>Transparency can never be assumed.</u> Transparency always has to be verified. |
| Objectivity | Whatever is communicated is to be objective. It should be clear when it is achieved. The use of metrics results in objectivity. |
| No details | The communication is to avoid details. Details result in complexity instead of simplicity. |
| No requirements | Requirements, in the sense of imposed demands and obligations which cannot be substantiated to contribute to achieving the desired outcome, restrict the use of expertise. |
| No relationship | Relationships which bypass the identification of the expert to achieve a particular desired outcome are to be avoided — e.g. existing connections forged while achieving different outcomes, established referral patterns, scheduling systems. |

Table 1. Brief description of each of the five principles of TONNNO.

The Decision Free Leader (DFL)

In any situation where several people collectively contribute to achieving a desired outcome, a leadership-role — be it a formal or informal one — is identified.

In DFS the definition of a leadership-role as found throughout the organisation (e.g. team leader, project manager, procurement officer, CEO, etc.) is the following (as is explained at length in the article “The role(s) of leadership explained” [6]):

The leadership-role is to create, sustain and communicate the conditions required to achieve the organisational unit’s desired outcome at minimal risk.

The Decision Free Leader (DFL) is someone who takes on the responsibility (the role) of ensuring that expertise can be utilised and that decisions are identified, avoided whenever possible, and the associated risk of the remaining decisions minimised.

The DFL-role is to create, sustain and communicate an environment of no-decision-making (see Figure 5). Here the guidelines offered by DICE and TONNNO are indispensable.

The actual activities associated with the DFL-role will vary from field to field and throughout an organisation. It may come down to making sure desired outcomes are defined and understood the same by all involved. It may revolve around creating and sustaining a safe and inclusive environment or working culture for all. It may be about ensuring everyone remains motivated.

The role of the DFL generally coincides with the “leadership-role” as discussed and described in [6]. A much more narrow, and still very useful, application of the DFL-role involves merely the identification of “decision making,” ensuring the use of DICE, and ensuring the implementation of TONNNO.

To take on the DFL-role successfully requires the ability to deal with change. A prerequisite to take on this role is a high level of perceptiveness, as explained in detail in [6]. Typical behavioural characteristics consistent with a high level of perceptiveness can be found in [Table 2](#) in the Appendix.

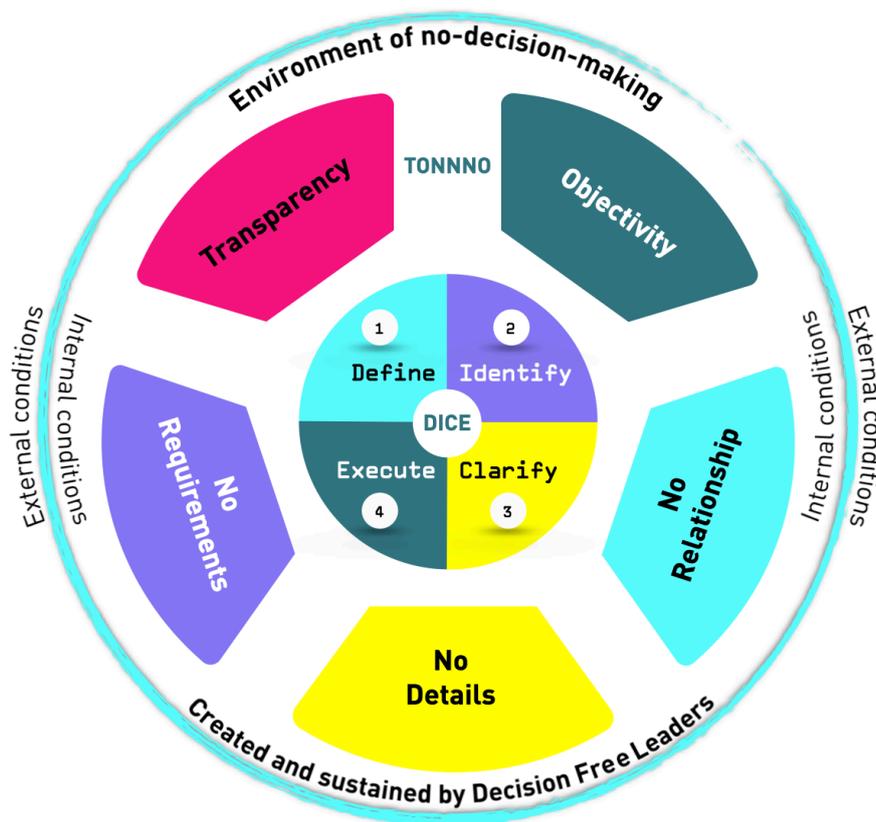


Figure 5. Decision Free Leaders are responsible for creating, sustaining (and in some cases communicating) an Environment of no-decision-making.

Which organisations will benefit from implementing DFS?

No organisation will be *worse off* if it makes better use of available expertise. So, as long as it is done at a pace and to an extent the organisation can manage, every organisation will benefit from implementing DFS. Having said that, for those organisations which operate in a static environment (the Clear domain, see next section), the gains may be marginal and the effort may not be worth it.

Implementing DFS becomes **crucial**, however, when the organisation:

- Operates in a competitive, dynamic and rapidly changing environment
- Is highly dependent on identifying, utilising and retaining experts in their workforce
- Is highly dependent on identifying and utilising external expertise to achieve their goals
- Is highly dependent on creating, improving and communicating their superior solutions
- Is exposed to risks which, when they occur, will have a great organisational impact
- Has to minimise the use of increasingly scarce resources of any kind
- Is working towards achieving desired outcomes it is passionate about
- Is in need of a (cultural) transformation to improve performance and resolve frustrations
- Has already managed a transformation resulting in better performance and the resolution of many frustrations and wants to sustain this transformation
- Is starting up and has to deal with rapid growth
- Wants to make change happen

How to use the approach of DFS in practice?

What DFS DOES NOT do for your organisation

The approach of Decision Fee Solutions provides *guidelines* in optimally utilising available expertise to achieve desired outcomes. DFS doesn't claim to know *what* your organisation has to do or *how* to do it — it leaves that to your favourite methodology. DFS tells you *what to pay attention to* along the way. To both *identify and prevent* choices which increase risk the desired outcome won't be achieved, or only through using many more resources than needed.

DFS is an approach which can be readily applied by organisations operating in an environment where cause and effect relationships are either clear or discoverable through analysis: the domain of “ordered systems”. This is the domain most organisations operate in. In this domain both decision making itself, and the risk associated with it, can be minimised through the utilisation of expertise. DFS can thus be used to optimise existing organisational procedures and ways of working, including those related to existing methodologies such as Agile, Lean, Holacracy, Vested, PMI's PMBOK, PRINCE2 and many others.

At the same time it is equally important to realise what DFS doesn't do: DFS doesn't explain or guide the user towards the definition of the “desired outcome” (the goal to be pursued) itself. This is especially non-trivial when the environment the organisation operates in is either complex or even chaotic. This is the domain of “unordered systems”.

DFS is an approach which stresses that desired outcomes must be transparently defined, that the expertise-which-is-available is to be utilised, and that all choices made which can't be fully substantiated are associated with risk. As such DFS can't be “executed” blindly. DFS is fully contextual: each situation is unique, and so the relative importance of the steps and principles, and how the role of the Decision Free Leader is best fulfilled, is equally unique.

To better explain how DFS can be used to help organisations achieve their desired outcomes, the role of the environment (the domain) within which the desired outcome is to be achieved, will be looked at next. For this Dave Snowden's “Cynefin Framework” [13-15] will be used

In what “domain” does your organisation operate?

The Cynefin framework

Cynefin is a *sense-making* framework, also called “a decision support system”. It gives “decision makers powerful new constructs that they can use to make sense of a wide range of unspecified problems” [14]. It is based on the principle of “bounded applicability”. This goes to say that almost all solutions (ways of doing things) are valid only within a certain context.

At its most basic, the Cynefin framework — defining context — distinguishes between three different kinds of systems and identifies five domains (see Figure 6): *ordered systems* (domains: Clear and Complicated), *complex systems* (Complex) and *chaotic systems* (Chaotic). The fifth domain, in the centre of Figure 6, is called Confusion. In this domain it is not clear to which system a particular situation belongs (for more on this domain see [15]).

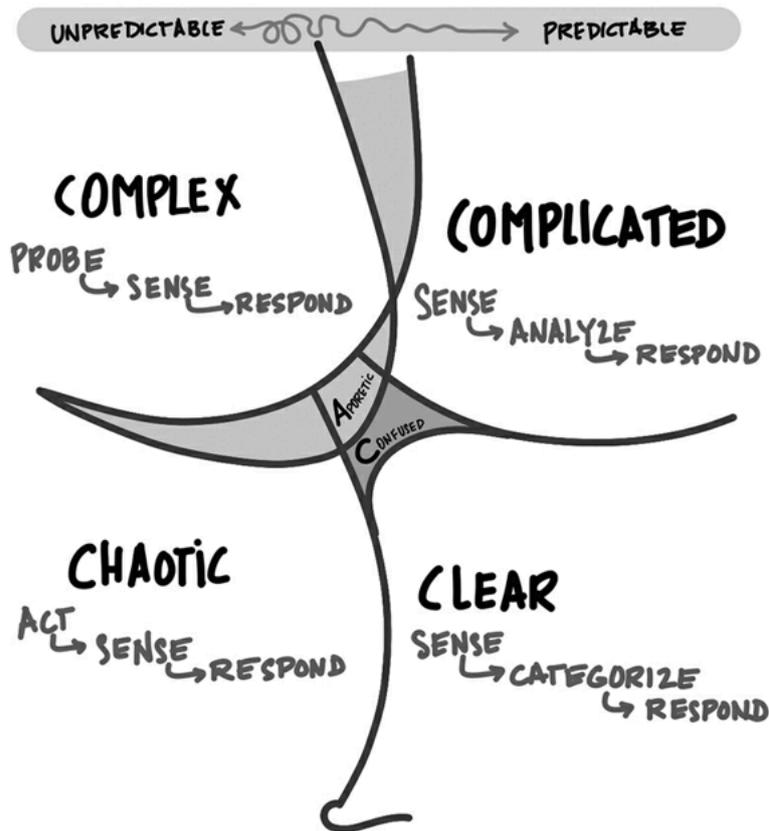


Figure 6. The Cynefin framework version 2020.

In an Ordered system, future outcomes are predictable as long as the constraints (the internal and external conditions) remain stable. In the domain of Clear the relationship between cause and effect is self-evident to practically all. In the domain of Complicated the discovery of cause and effect relations require analysis and or expertise.

In a Complex system, constraints do exist, but are entangled, do not allow for the determination of linear causality and outcomes are generally unpredictable. In a Chaotic system there are no constraints.

Decision Free Solutions and the Cynefin domains

The role of the organisation's perceptiveness

The Cynefin framework is an extremely rich and powerful framework, including many concepts, tools and practical approaches to deal with (extreme) uncertainty and how to navigate the various boundary transitions from one domain to another. In the case of DFS, the framework is useful to determine — for the ordered and complex systems — the relationship between decision making, expertise and desired outcomes.

Almost all organisations operate in the domains of Clear, Complicated and Complex. But in which domain a particular organisation *believes* it operates is a matter of perception. To an organisation which hampers the utilisation of its available expertise, its environment may appear Complex when it is merely Complicated. Consequently, it may operate under the mistaken belief that it has no choice but to rely on decision making and mechanisms of control.

The approach of DFS states that an organisation's "level of perceptiveness" can be assessed through the observation of behavioural characteristics as explained in the Appendix (see [Table 3](#)). To determine the level of perceptiveness of an organisation is of use to assess the likelihood the organisation does indeed operate in the domain it believes to be in, and thus whether the approach it uses (e.g., Agile) is a good match for the situation.

An organisation with a low level of perceptiveness will tend to overestimate the "un-order" of the environment it operates in, and will thus both underestimate the importance of identifying and utilising expertise, and spend more resources in achieving its desired outcomes than is necessary.

DFS in the Clear domain

In the Clear domain, where both initial and external conditions are stable and cause and effect relationships are obvious to all, "experts" are those with experience, decision making is practically absent (all choices are readily substantiated), and desired outcomes tend to be non-ambiguous. This is the domain of "best practices".

Organisations operating in this domain should be careful not to rely too heavily on rules, protocols, procedures, etc., to not be caught off guard by gradual changes in the environment and or the definition of the desired outcome itself.

DFS in the Complicated domain

The Complicated domain is the domain in which most organisational activities take place. Care must be taken that desired outcomes are well-defined and understood the same by all involved. This is a pre-requisite to both identify and utilise expertise.

In this domain — the domain of "good practices" — the DFS guidelines will have the greatest impact by minimising all types of decision making and ensuring clear communication between experts and non-experts to prevent mechanisms of control kicking in.

DFS in the Complex domain

In the Complex domain, as long as desired outcomes are transparently defined, it are "the experts" who are best at identifying patterns, and thus at proposing next steps. In this domain it may not be readily obvious who the experts are, and where to find them. This is where the Cynefin framework is indispensable.

In the Complex domain decision making cannot be avoided and is very hard to minimise — choices cannot be fully substantiated to contribute to achieving the desired outcome — but experts (through the combination of their experience and a high level of perceptiveness) will be able to minimise the risk associated with the decisions made (and monitor (perceive) the situation as it develops).

In this domain the Cynefin framework offers valuable insight in how to facilitate identifying patterns (e.g., how to use the combined expertise of a number of people), and how to have activities cross the boundary from Complex to Complicated wherever possible. Once patterns have been identified and actions defined, the guidelines of DFS apply.

It is crucial to realise that decisions can't be avoided, that the risk associated with them can only be minimised but not taken away, and that thus *risk management and risk mitigation must always be considered*.

Making a start with DFS in practice

By clarifying decisions to be *choices not fully substantiated to contribute to achieving a desired outcome*, DFS opens up multiple pathways to improve organisational performance. DFS doesn't advocate a drastic reorganisation of the way work is done. It advocates a new way of looking at what stands in the way of using expertise.

A good place to start is to determine the domain the organisational activities take place in, whether — throughout the organisation — desired outcomes are transparent and non-ambiguous, to identify the various types of decision making present, and to have clarity on where (at which level, or in what area) the associated risks of decisions made are greatest.

Decision Free Solutions provides presentations and workshops explaining how DFS works towards utilising available expertise by overcoming the challenges all types of decision making and the communication between experts and non-experts pose in practice. A typical sequence of the "stages" involved is shown in Figure 7.

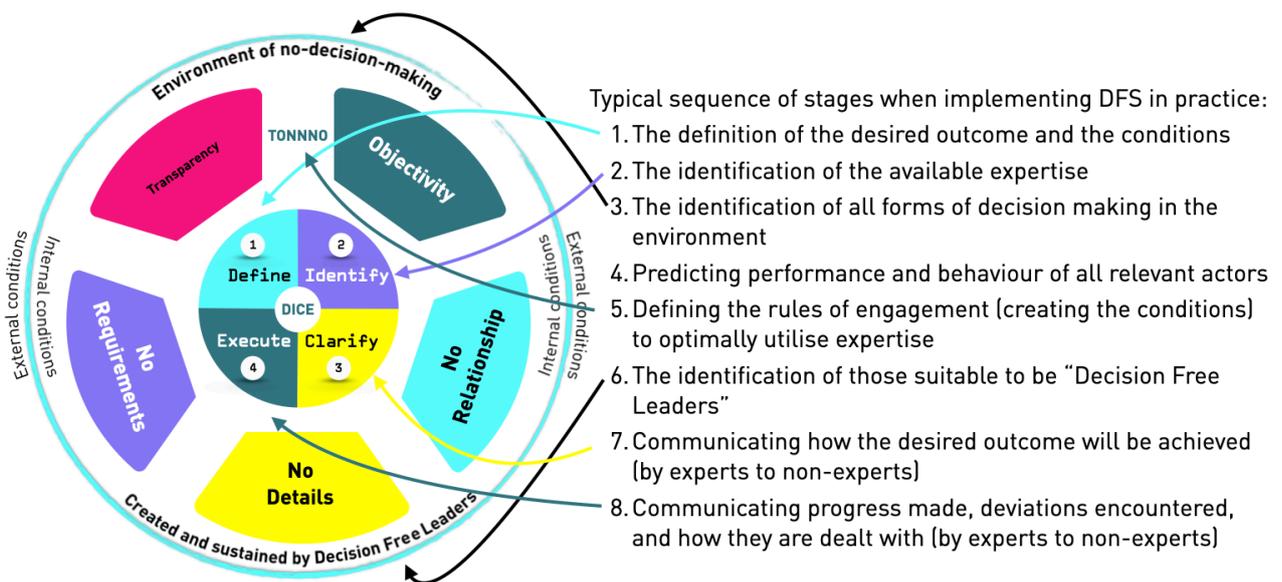


Figure 7. Example of a sequence of stages when implementing DFS in practice.

What does it take to realise the many benefits of DFS?

To implement DFS the sole requirement is that its logic is understood. Identifying decision making comes first. Wherever decisions are made, expertise is either lacking or not utilised. In either case, the risk the desired outcome will not be achieved is increased.

To realise the maximum benefits of DFS — from resolving frustrations to freeing up resources to making change happen — may involve many (organisational) changes. Consequently the principles of change management apply fully.

Each organisation has a certain capacity for change. Greater organisational changes rely, to a greater extent, on people in leadership-roles having a high level of perceptiveness (which may thus be a practical bottle-neck). In the end what it takes to implement DFS is, in fact, implementing DFS (see [Figure 7](#)).

There are many organisations who have introduced ways which succeeded to improve outcomes and resolve frustrations. Be it in a particular aspect of an organisation, or as a whole. Many of such examples can be found in [9]. But, crucially, using DFS, there is no need to “experiment” (as in throwing things at the wall), as DFS allows for a substantiated approach to change, which can be predicted.

In “The approach of Decision Free Solutions in Action” [10], several new ways of working as pioneered by a range of organisations (and as can be found in [9]) are explained using DFS’ guidelines. An overview of the examples provided in that document are listed in the next section.

What it takes, ultimately, is the need and or desire to achieve one or more of the benefits that comes with optimally utilising expertise: achieving goals, using minimal resources, resolving frustrations.

For more information, support (presentations, workshops or consultancy) and publications visit decisionfreesolutions.com or contact us at info@decisionfreesolutions.com.

Examples of “DFS in Action”

In the document “The approach of Decision Free Solutions in Action” [10] several pioneering organisations and methods are discussed (as summarised below). The document provides examples of high-performing organisations doing things “differently”. In each instance the perspective of DFS is applied to explain the logic behind it. Sometimes it makes suggestions as to how performance can be improved even further.

The greater point the document makes is that the route to increased organisational performance is not one of “experimentation”. There are plenty of organisational examples available as to how expertise can be utilised better, and each and every time there is an underlying logic which can be used to adapt it to local circumstances.

An organisation rigidly avoiding decision making — Buurtzorg is a Dutch organisation providing neighbourhood care. Buurtzorg employs more than 14.000 nurses distributed over more than a thousand autonomous self-managing teams, with an office of no more than 50 people, and 20 coaches. Buurtzorg is a famous organisation in management literature for its lack of hierarchy and its spectacular results in terms of finance, quality of care and job satisfaction. DFS explains how the organisation’s success hinges on a single principle: minimising decision making.

Why “K2K Emocionando” is so successful in transforming organisations — A small team of visionaries have organised themselves in “K2K Emocionando”. This group has successfully transformed more than 50 organisations, predominantly in the Basque country of Spain. They call their approach “NER,” which stands for New Style of Relationships. DFS is not only able to provide an explanation for the success of their approach, its logic also allows for suggestions for possible improvements.

Proposing enhancements to Haier’s famous RenDanHeYi-model — Over the course of four decades, Haier, the Chinese white goods and electronics manufacturer, went from building faulty fridges to servicing customer needs at the time they arise. Their latest transformation is built on their unique RenDanHeYi-model (and often referred to as a “platform ecosystem”). Today, Haier consists out of 4’000 independent micro-enterprises able to make almost all of their own choices without consulting superiors or breaking protocol. Simply based on its guidelines, DFS is able to propose further enhancements to this most modern of organisational models.

A successful and “hidden” cultural transformation in a governmental department — The successful cultural transformation of the Belgian “Ministry of Social Security” shows that a transformation is possible also in very traditional and hierarchical organisation. But the initiator of this transformation also had to hide his intentions from his superiors to do so. The ministry went on to receive the “Gender Balanced Organisation Award” without having a gender policy in place. Which, according to DFS, is a logical outcome when creating the conditions to utilise expertise.

The importance of purpose and perceptiveness — The American retail company “Patagonia” has a mission statement which provides clear guidance in making organisational choices, minimising the need for rules and regulations, and attracting people who care. Other organisations hire people not based on their resumé, but based on alignment with an organisation’s core values or cultural fit

(municipality Hollands Kroon, Spotify). DFS explains the logic behind the success of these organisations.

The Achilles heel of new ways of working is sustainability — There are quite a few success stories to be told when it comes to organisational transformation. Often these organisation where either on the brink of failure and in need of drastic change, or they started with an idea of how to do things “different”. What these organisations tend to have in common is a willingness to “experiment”. What most of these organisations also have in common, is a need for continued experimentation, guidance and support. DFS explains the constant threats these organisations are exposed to, and how they can be remedied “from within”.

Defining a salary structure in absence of hierarchy — In organisations which have made the transition from a strictly hierarchical organisation to a flatter and less formal one, the compensation system also needs to be altered. Two different approaches — from the UK firm Smarkets and the Swiss company Freitag — are analysed, and it is shown how DFS guidelines can be used to define a new compensation scheme from scratch without the need for experimentation.

Procuring expertise instead of products or services — Almost all organisations have a department of procurement to procure products and solutions. In many cases buying organisations have a good idea of what they need. But when the buyer lacks the expertise to confidently define requirements, or when organisational success hinges on the successful delivery of the vendor’s solution, traditional procurement strategies — based on defining requirements, exchanging detailed information, and control — are unable to identify the expertise they are in need of. Applying DFS to procurement results in a method which both identifies and utilises the expertise of the vendor best positioned to achieve the organisation’s desired outcome.

Decision making as the cause of stress, interventions and trauma in birthing — Birthing is an entirely physiological process which requires no interventions in 95% of all births. But despite the intimacy, the “magic” and its life-altering importance, a plethora of rules, procedures and protocols makes it practically impossible for the expectant mother to have the birthing experience she wants for herself. DFS explains how expectant women can be empowered to achieve a safe, non-traumatic and personal birthing experience without unwanted interventions.

DFS-predictions on organisational performance and leadership

Any approach based on logic makes predictions which can be tested

From DFS follows that *any* organisation which is able to achieve its organisational aim with minimal use of resources — and thus at minimal risk — is to be considered a “high performing organisation”.

Following the logic of what is required to optimally utilise expertise and become a high performing organisation, DFS offers guidelines in the form of four steps ([DICE](#)), five principles ([TONNNO](#)) and the role of the [Decision Free Leader](#) (DFL) to create these conditions. These guidelines can be applied in any environment in which an organisation is to achieve its goals.

DFS logically argues that high performing organisations *must thus* have created the conditions to make optimal use of the expertise that is available to them. These conditions are minimal (hierarchical) decision making — replacing them with substantiated choices wherever possible — and the optimal communication between experts and experts-in-something-else.

In today’s management literature, several case studies can be found on high performing organisations — often called pioneering organisations — which operate in this way. These include Buurtzorg, Spotify, Haier, Patagonia. In a separate article it is shown how DFS’ guidelines are able to explain the success of these organisations [\[10\]](#), while a brief introduction is provided already in a [separate section](#) in this article.

More generally, based on the guidelines and their underlying logic, a range of statements and predictions on both [organisational performance](#) and [leadership](#) can be made, which can all be substantiated and independently verified.

On organisational performance

Following DFS’ logic, the following statements can be made and verified:

- **How to achieve high organisational performance** — through which structure, management- and leadership-style, approach to decision making, recruitment strategy, etc. — **is a function of the environment** in which the organisation is to achieve its goals:
 - **In *static* environments** — organisations can thrive in absence of a vision/purpose, using hierarchical structures and hierarchical decision making, with promotions based on experience and hiring on skill.
 - **In *dynamic* environments** — organisations tend to thrive when their vision/purpose guides choice making, when their organisational structure (hierarchical or otherwise) sheds hierarchical decision making, when leadership-*roles* are taken on by those who combine (some) experience with a *high level of perceptiveness*, and when hiring takes someone’s level of perceptiveness into account (e.g., “hire for culture”).

- **In organisations where hierarchical decision making³ is the norm/strictly adhered to:**
 - *Unless* when operating in *static* environments, performance cannot be high (*if* organisational goals are achieved, *then* while using many more resources than necessary because of large overhead, see next point)
 - Mechanisms of control (frequent meetings with many attendees, rules, protocols, procedures, contracts, “best practices”) — often resulting in multiple layers of management — become the norm *out of necessity*: it is a mechanism to mitigate the risks resulting from not being able to identify and utilise expertise.
 - Reorganisations aimed at cutting costs/doing away with management layers *will invariably fail* as the necessity for control remains for not being able to fully identify and utilise expertise — reorganisations thus become *cyclical*.
 - There will always be a sizeable gender-gap in leadership-roles *throughout the organisation* — as societal biases enter the organisation through the mechanism of decision making (the stricter the adherence to hierarchy and hierarchical decision making, the greater the gap) (see [section on decision making](#), [6]).
 - The workforce *will not be* a reflection of society’s religious, racial and gender make-up — as the decision making processes in HR include societal biases, and the focus on evidence of education/experience (just another mechanism of control) benefits those who have been given most opportunities by said society (see [12]).
 - When they are public sector organisations tasked to apply or to control rules and procedures to the public, their actions/decisions will *invariably* reflect the societal biases on racism and discrimination (because of how the organisation functions), *also in absence of any racist or discriminatory intent*.
 - *Overt* abuse, racism and discrimination (as felt by those in the organisation who are less-privileged) is *as present* as its existence *is ubiquitously denied* by the organisation itself (as hiring policies are starkly in favour of the most privileged who have received most opportunities and who generally fail to perceive it).
 - A range of easily observable “behavioural characteristics” of this type of organisation allow for its identification (and thus the prediction of its relative non-performance) by potential customers and competitors alike (see [Appendix](#)).
- **In high performing organisations which are successful in dynamic environments:**
 - The organisational purpose, its vision and its mission, and in extension the desired outcomes at each and every organisational unit tends to be non-ambiguous and transparent to those it concerns.
 - Any existing hierarchy is not, or only to a small extent, a structure of power. “Hierarchical decision making” is largely replaced by “hierarchical approval,” and “decision making” is largely replaced by the utilisation of expertise (often through processes known as shared, distributed, pushed-down or integrative “decision making”).
 - The work culture is open and safe for everyone (to contribute their expertise). Racism and discrimination is comparatively rare.
 - The organisations attracts people with a high perceptiveness, the hiring process looks beyond someone’s training and experience, and decision making and its associated societal biases play a marginal role.

³ Hierarchical decision making: decisions are made by someone based on their position in the hierarchy, without the need for substantiation, without recourse, without identifying/treating them as a potential risk.

-
- Transparency is the norm (required for expertise to be fully utilised); information — including on the team/department/organisation's performance through the measurement of relevant outcomes — flows freely and is widely available.
 - The employees' sense of freedom, responsibility and trust — and its associated motivation, productivity and high retention-rate — are not organisational principles, but *merely the logical outcome* of having clear desired outcomes, the conditions in place to identify and utilise expertise, and measuring meaningful outcomes.
 - A range of easily observable "behavioural characteristics" of this type of organisation allow for its identification (and thus the prediction of its high performance) by potential customers and competitors alike (see [Appendix](#)).

On leadership

- **In organisations where hierarchical decision making is the norm/strictly adhered to:**
 - Leadership is associated with decision making, and hence favours those with a transactional approach and an appetite for risk (there is no need to substantiate decisions).
 - Those in leadership positions, throughout the organisation, are appointed through decision making (where societal and gender biases concerning leadership are at play) and or on the basis of experience (favouring the privileged who have been handed most opportunities).
 - Because decision making is the leader's prerogative, and decisions don't have to be substantiated, the organisation will not attempt to identify the expertise which would contribute to minimising the risk associated with those decisions.
 - For all the above reasons there will be a *gender gap* (and a *race gap* and a *religion gap*) in leadership positions throughout the organisation. The size of this gap is a measure of organisation *inefficiency*. The greater the gap, the more inefficient the organisation operates.
 - Increasing diversity in leadership positions through rules (e.g., a certain percentage must be female) will *not lessen* the gender gap in leadership positions *throughout the organisation* (the organisation may comply to the rule but not change). Organisational performance thus will not improve in any meaningful way.
- **In high performing organisations which are successful in dynamic environments:**
 - Leadership is associated with creating the right conditions to utilise expertise. This includes creating clarity on the organisation's vision/mission, transparency, cultural safety, compassion, etc. They thus minimise risk the organisational goal is not achieved.
 - Leadership will make decisions when they have to — when there is no time to identify/ utilise expertise, when relevant expertise is not available — and be aware they are taking a risk. When this risk occurs, when more information comes to light, when expertise is identified, leadership will readily reconsider their decision.
 - Those in leadership positions, throughout the organisation, have a high level of perceptiveness — which expresses itself in behavioural characteristics which are in support of an open and safe culture. Expert leadership is the combination of these qualities and experience. This is recognised in the appointment process.
 - Those taking on leadership positions throughout the organisation will, as a group, be a fair representation of the workforce's composition in terms of gender, race and religion (as expertise has no colour, gender, form, name, title or religion).

Appendix

Identifying someone's level of perceptiveness through observation

The concept that the “level of perceptiveness” shines through in a number of linked behavioural characteristics, many of which can be easily observed (and others predicted) was introduced by Dr. Dean Kashiwagi [11]. It is explained at length in [5, 6].

To perceive is “to become aware, to come to realise or understand” (Oxford dictionary). Perception differs from mere observation in that it comes with a certain type of curiosity, a desire to link the observed effect to a cause. In “perceptiveness” it is the elements of “awareness” and “understanding” which are required to take on the role of the Decision Free Leader successfully.

As the ability to perceive lies on a continuous spectrum — from all-perceiving to non-perceiving — the assessment of someone's level of perceptiveness becomes more reliable the *more consistent* and the *more apparent* the observed characteristics are. In practice, relatively few observations already suffice to distinguish between perceptive, somewhat perceptive, and non-perceptive individuals.

The behavioural characteristics of either a perceiver or a non-perceiver can be grouped. Some of these grouped characteristics are easy to observe, others are not. Which simply means, as the characteristics are related, that those characteristics which are difficult to identify can be derived.

For example, you might not be able to directly observe whether someone is trustworthy or not, but you can observe whether someone is *likely* to be trustworthy. A series of observations in one situation thus allows you to predict (with a certain degree of likelihood) how someone will behave in another situation.

In Table 2 the behavioural characteristics for a perceiver and for a non-perceiver are shown. For a detailed explanation of the four categories see [5].

| PERCEIVER | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| No decision making | No control and influence | Steadiness | Caring |
| Conditions and universal rules determine outcome: utilise everyone's expertise | Understands outcome depends on conditions and can't be forced | Not easily surprised, accepts reality, doesn't feel threatened | Aware of interrelatedness role of environment, own responsibility to contribute |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always aiming for transparency Identifies decisions as risk Approver and enabler Embraces meritocracy Focus on goal to be achieved Doesn't micro-manage Has overview Welcomes support Encourages creativity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't try to persuade Focus on identification of others' skills and talents Focus on alignment Accepts reality Humble Never blames individual Results are produced by culture/entire team Avoids dogged pursuit of unattainable goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approachable Doesn't compete Doesn't abuse or discriminate Responsible Respectful Honest Informal Thoughtful Quiet Communicates directly Communicates openly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will make others feel at ease Interested in the whole person Achieves work-life balance Volunteers Compassionate Patient Supportive Trustworthy Good listener |
| NON-PERCEIVER | | | |
| Decision making | Control and influence | Erratic and emotional | Lack of caring |
| Conditions and universal rules are poorly perceived, event's outcome unclear | Fails to see outcome is pre-determined by conditions and universal rules | Lack of understanding, surprised by behaviour and outcome, insecure | Fails to see interrelatedness, disregard for role of environment, not part of |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes decision making Belief in "gut instinct" Feels no need to explain decisions Does not mind contradicting oneself Does not prepare for meetings Quick to make up excuses Likes to talk instead of listen Strictly adheres to hierarchy Unable to change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preference for rules, protocols and contracts Values relationships and loyalty over expertise Links performance to the individual Readily apportions blame and praise Belief in incentives Greatly values hierarchy, authority and prestige Disregard for truth Uses information strategically; hidden agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays abusive behaviour Cause of stress for those around Sees everything as win-lose Sees colleagues as competitors Never responsible when things go wrong Self-centred Boastful Opportunistic Easily hurt/feel threatened | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on self (as opposed to e.g. family) No volunteering work that requires effort Unable to take other people's perspective No interest in other people's problems Not moved by other people's fate Focus on wealth as measure of self-worth Belief that people get what they deserve |

Table 2. Overview of behavioural characteristics associated with a high level of perceptiveness (Perceiver) and a low level of perceptiveness (Non-perceiver) (from [6]).

Identifying an organisation's level of perceptiveness through observation

What applies to individuals also applies to organisations. Organisations which have access to, and also utilise, expertise are equally better at observing and grasping changes in the environment they operate in. They tend to respond quicker, operate with greater responsibility, provide better quality solutions, etc. Vice versa, organisations which operate predominantly through decision making will have to deal with plenty of internal risk. They try to manage this risk through many layers of management, rules, procedures, protocols, etc.

In Table 3 some organisational characteristics, many of which are easy to observe also from the outside, are listed for both perceiving (expert) and non-perceiving (non-expert) organisations.

| Characteristics of a PERCEIVING (expert) organisation | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| No decision making | No control and influence | Steadiness | Caring |
| Conditions and universal rules determine outcome: utilise everyone's expertise | Understands outcome depends on conditions and can't be forced | Not easily surprised, accepts reality, safe environment | Aware of interrelatedness with environment, own responsibility to contribute |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loose or nearly absent hierarchy Relatively few but well prepared meetings Quick to respond Issues get resolved quickly Measure performances Everyone shares sense of responsibility Quality assurance instead of control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few rules and protocols Few staff functions, staff functions have supportive role Minimises the use of contracts Facilitates work-life balance Recognises performance is always collective No-blame culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low employee turnover Few to no complaints of racism and discrimination Informal culture Easy access to leadership Open communication Not prone to litigate Relatively high job-security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has clear vision and mission providing context for organisational purpose Organisational purpose/mission/vision resolves frustrations Uses profits to pursue organisational purpose Interest of client is interest of organisation Shares lessons learned |
| Characteristics of a NON-PERCEIVING (non-expert) organisation | | | |
| Decision making | Control and influence | Erratic and emotional | Lack of caring |
| Conditions and universal rules are poorly perceived, event's outcome unclear | Fails to see outcome is pre-determined by conditions and universal rules | Lack of understanding, surprised by development and outcomes | Sees organisation in isolation, as competing with outside world |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strictly hierarchical Many management layers Long response times Frequent and poorly prepared meetings Meetings have lots of participants Issues don't get resolved without 'decision maker' Produce lots of internal information/communication Large marketing/PR expenditures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many rules, protocols and contracts Lots of internal control and inspection Many formal staff functions producing directives Reliance on complex legal contracts Use of individual bonuses and other (financial) incentives Long work weeks are the norm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick to litigate Culture perpetuates societal biases Internal conflicts don't always get resolved Internal competition for resources Unclear who is responsible Unpredictable company politics High employee turnover High sick leave Frequent reorganisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No or unclear vision and mission Sees profit as organisational purpose Focus on short-term performance and developments Little interest in (long-term relationships with) clients Win-lose mentality No clear strategy Limits flow of information, both in- and externally |

Table 3. Overview of behavioural characteristics of both perceiving (expert) organisations and non-perceiving (non-expert) organisations (see [5]).

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