HOW TO **RUN GO / HOLD / STOP DECISIONS** WITHOUT FALSE CERTAINTY

Making Clear Calls with Incomplete Information

WHERE THIS IS USED

- Venture Studio programs
- Corporate Incubators
- Accelerators (corporate or government-backed)
- CVC opportunity formation (pre-investment)
- AI Studio validation and prioritization
- Foundry-as-a-Service engagements

AUDIENCE

- CEOs
- CFOs
- Chiefs of Strategy
- Heads of Innovation
- Executive sponsors accountable for decisions

PHASE

Phase One (Discovery & Thesis): Pre-build / Pre-funding / Pre-team

1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discovery & Thesis Phase decisions are made with limited data, high uncertainty, and real consequences. Many organizations either delay decisions until certainty appears or push initiatives forward based on optimism and momentum.

This guide explains how TURN8 **runs go / hold / stop decisions** in Phase One without pretending certainty exists. The objective is to make timely, defensible calls based on evidence thresholds, learning progress, and controlled downside—not narratives or confidence.

2
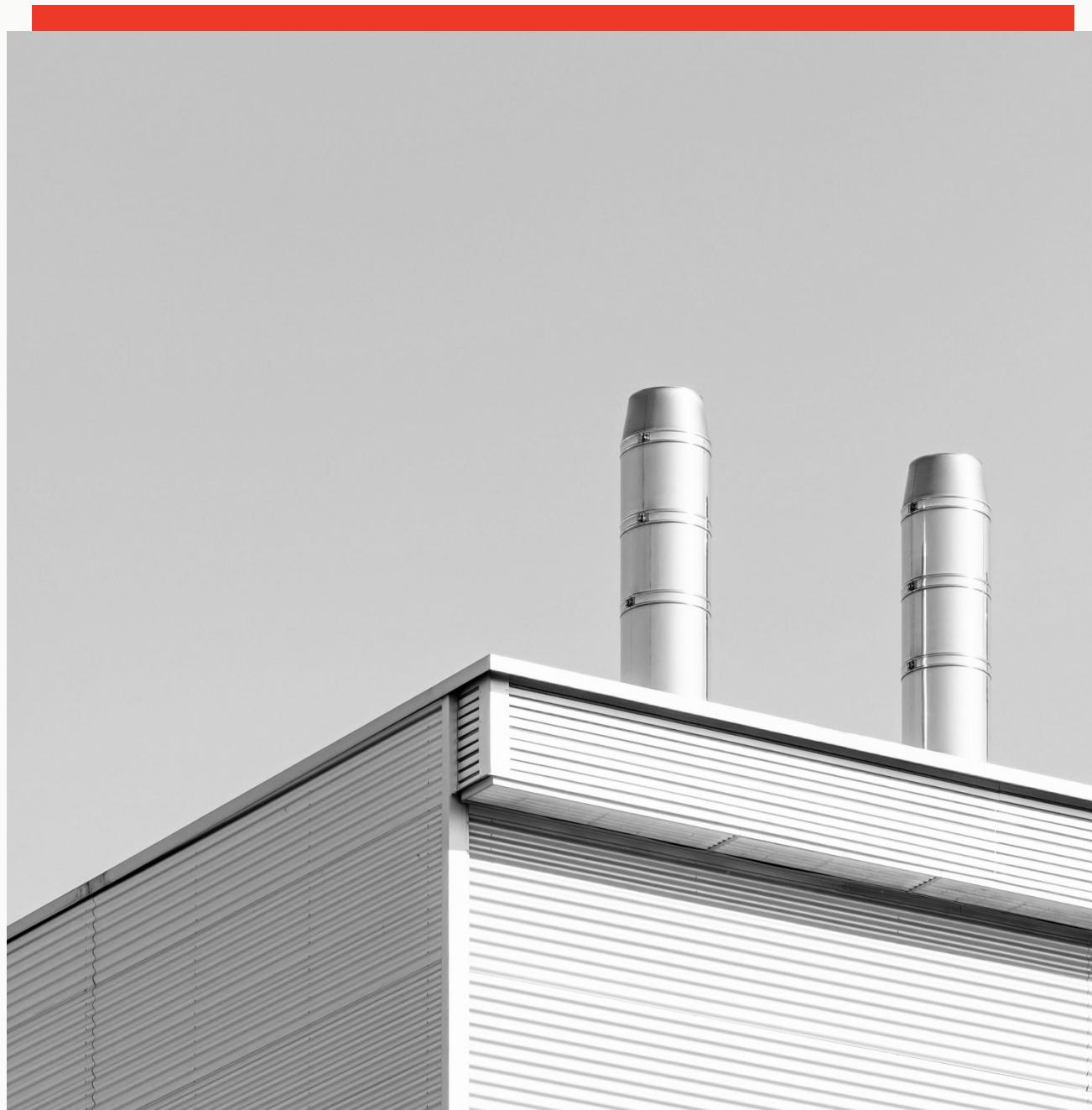
THE CORE PROBLEM

In early venture work, decision-making usually fails in one of two ways:

1. Decision paralysis

• Leaders wait for "one more data point"
• Validation cycles extend repeatedly
• Weak initiatives survive by default

2. Decision by momentum

• Activity is mistaken for progress
• Confidence replaces evidence
• Stopping feels politically costly

In GCC organizations, these patterns are reinforced by:

Cultural preference
for certainty

Hierarchical
escalation dynamics

Fear of visible
failure

The real issue is this:

Phase One decisions must be made before certainty exists.

Delaying decisions does not reduce risk; it increases cost.

3

PREREQUISITES

WHAT MUST BE IN PLACE?

• Defined venture challenge statements and opportunity areas
• Phase-One governance with fixed decision cadence
• Predefined evidence requirements

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS INDICATORS

• Comfort making reversible decisions
• Acceptance that "hold" and "stop" are valid outcomes
• Clear decision ownership

RED FLAGS (DO NOT PROCEED IF PRESENT)

• Decisions are routinely deferred
• Evidence thresholds shift over time
• Outcomes are not documented

↘

If these conditions exist, **decisions will drift**.

4

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

STEP 1 — SEPARATE CONFIDENCE FROM EVIDENCE

⌖ ACTION

Explicitly distinguish between:

• What the team believes
• What the evidence shows

Confidence is allowed.
Decisions are not based on it.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES

• Letting conviction substitute for proof
• Rewarding confidence in reviews

◎ WHY IT MATTERS

Strong narratives often mask weak evidence.

⊘ DECISION CHECKPOINT

Can evidence be shown independently of narrative?

🗓 TIME ESTIMATE

Ongoing

STEP 2 — ANCHOR DECISIONS TO PREDEFINED CRITERIA

⌖ ACTION

Use the evidence thresholds defined earlier to frame decisions.
Ask only:
• Did we meet the criteria?
• If not, why?

Avoid adding new criteria mid-review.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES

• Reframing goals after results are known
• Introducing qualitative exceptions

◎ WHY IT MATTERS

Changing criteria retroactively protects weak initiatives.

⊘ DECISION CHECKPOINT

Are criteria unchanged since validation began?

🗓 TIME ESTIMATE

15 minutes per review

STEP 3 — TREAT "HOLD" AS A REAL OUTCOME

⌖ ACTION

Use "hold" only when:

• Evidence is genuinely inconclusive
• Specific conditions can resolve
  uncertainty
• A clear time-box is set

"Hold" is not "continue exploring."

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES

• Using hold to avoid stop decisions
• Leaving hold conditions vague

◎ WHY IT MATTERS

Misused holds create
zombie initiatives.

⊘ DECISION CHECKPOINT

Are hold conditions explicit
and time-bound?

🗓 TIME ESTIMATE

15 minutes

STEP 4 — MAKE STOP DECISIONS EXPLICIT AND FINAL

⌖ ACTION

When evidence fails, stop decisively.

Document:

• What was tested
• What failed
• Why stopping is correct

No quiet carryover.

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES

• Rebranding stops as "pauses"
• Leaving stopped work unofficially alive

◎ WHY IT MATTERS

Ambiguous stops erode
governance credibility.

⊘ DECISION CHECKPOINT

Is the stop visible and
enforced?

🗓 TIME ESTIMATE
Ongoing

STEP 5   **DECIDE ON GO WITH CONDITIONS, NOT OPTIMISM**

⌾ ACTION

When deciding "go," explicitly state:

• What is now believed to be true
• What remains uncertain
• What must be proven next

⚠ COMMON MISTAKES

• Treating go as full validation
• Escalating without guardrails

◉ WHY IT MATTERS

A "go" without conditions is premature commitment.

⊘ DECISION CHECKPOINT

Are next-phase risks clearly named?

▦ TIME ESTIMATE

30 minutes

5

DECISION FRAMEWORKS

GO / HOLD / STOP QUALITY TEST

Decisions are sound if:

1.

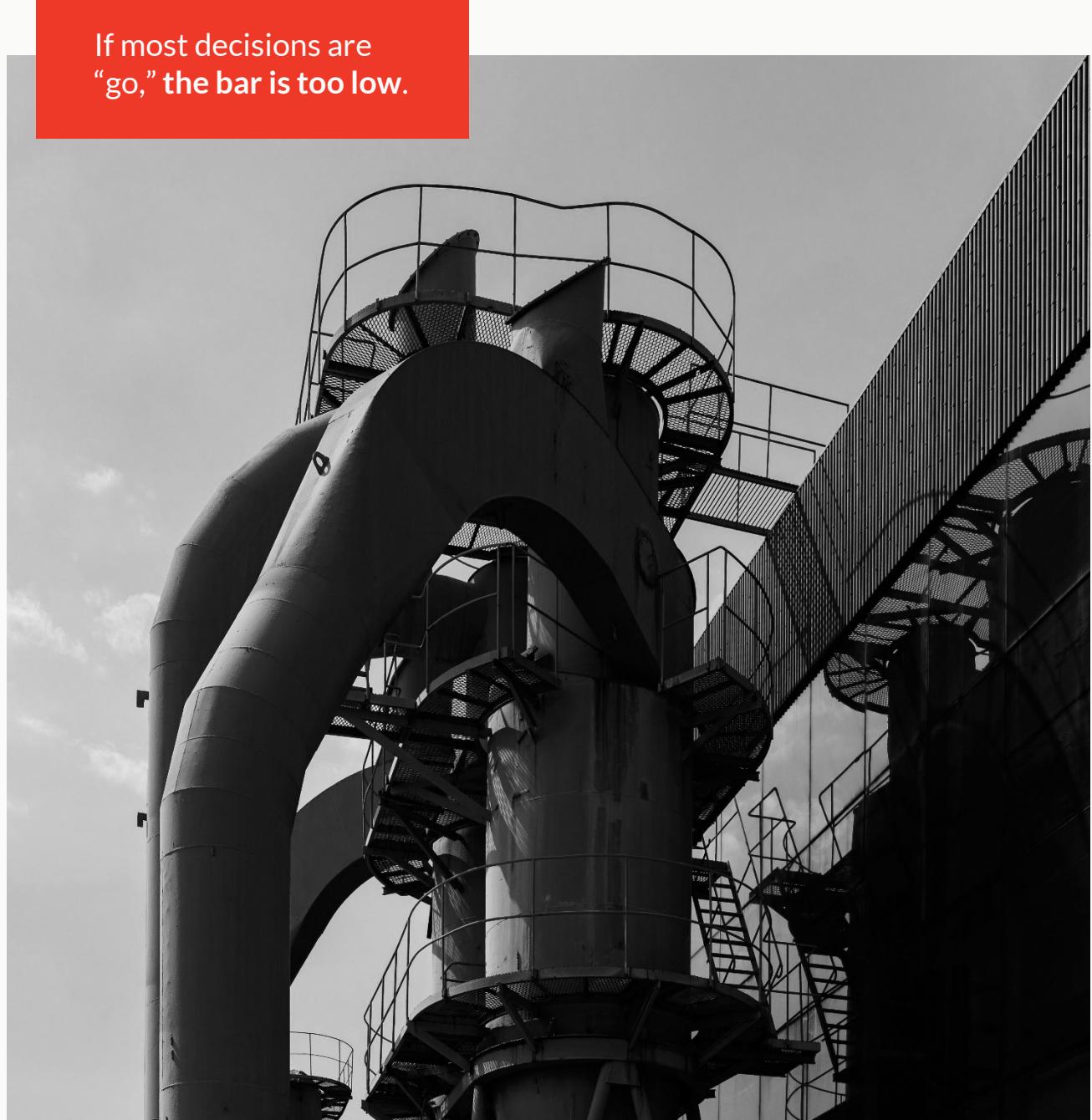Criteria are fixed in advance

2.

Outcomes are explicit

3.

Stops occur regularly

If most decisions are "go," **the bar is too low**.

6

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

PEOPLE

- One decision owner
- Venture operator presenting evidence
- Minimal advisory input

BUDGET

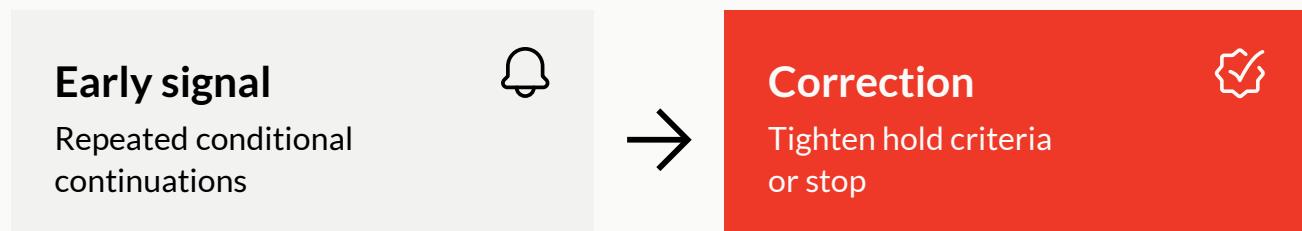- Minimal
- No incremental spend tied to indecision

TOOLS

- Standard decision templates
- Evidence summaries
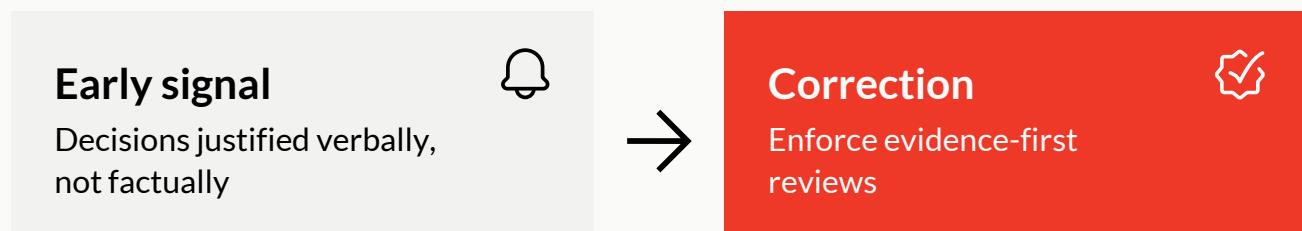- AI may assist summarization, not judgment

7

TURN8

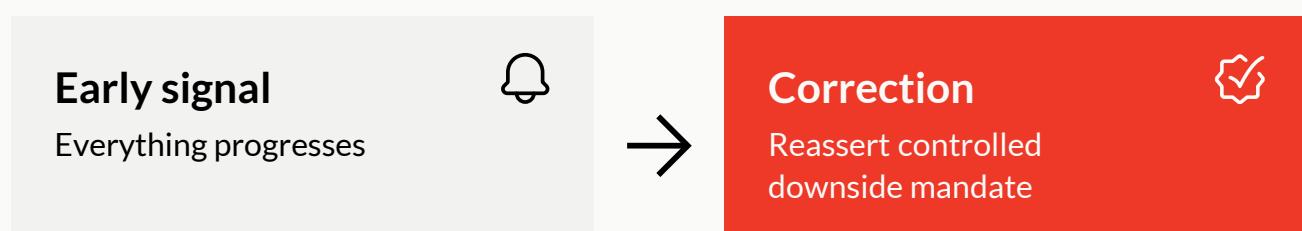# COMMON FAILURE MODES

FAILURE MODE: ENDLESS HOLDS

Early signal 🔔	→	Correction ☑
Repeated conditional continuations		Tighten hold criteria or stop

FAILURE MODE: NARRATIVE OVERRIDES EVIDENCE

Early signal 🔔	→	Correction ☑
Decisions justified verbally, not factually		Enforce evidence-first reviews

FAILURE MODE: STOPS ARE AVOIDED

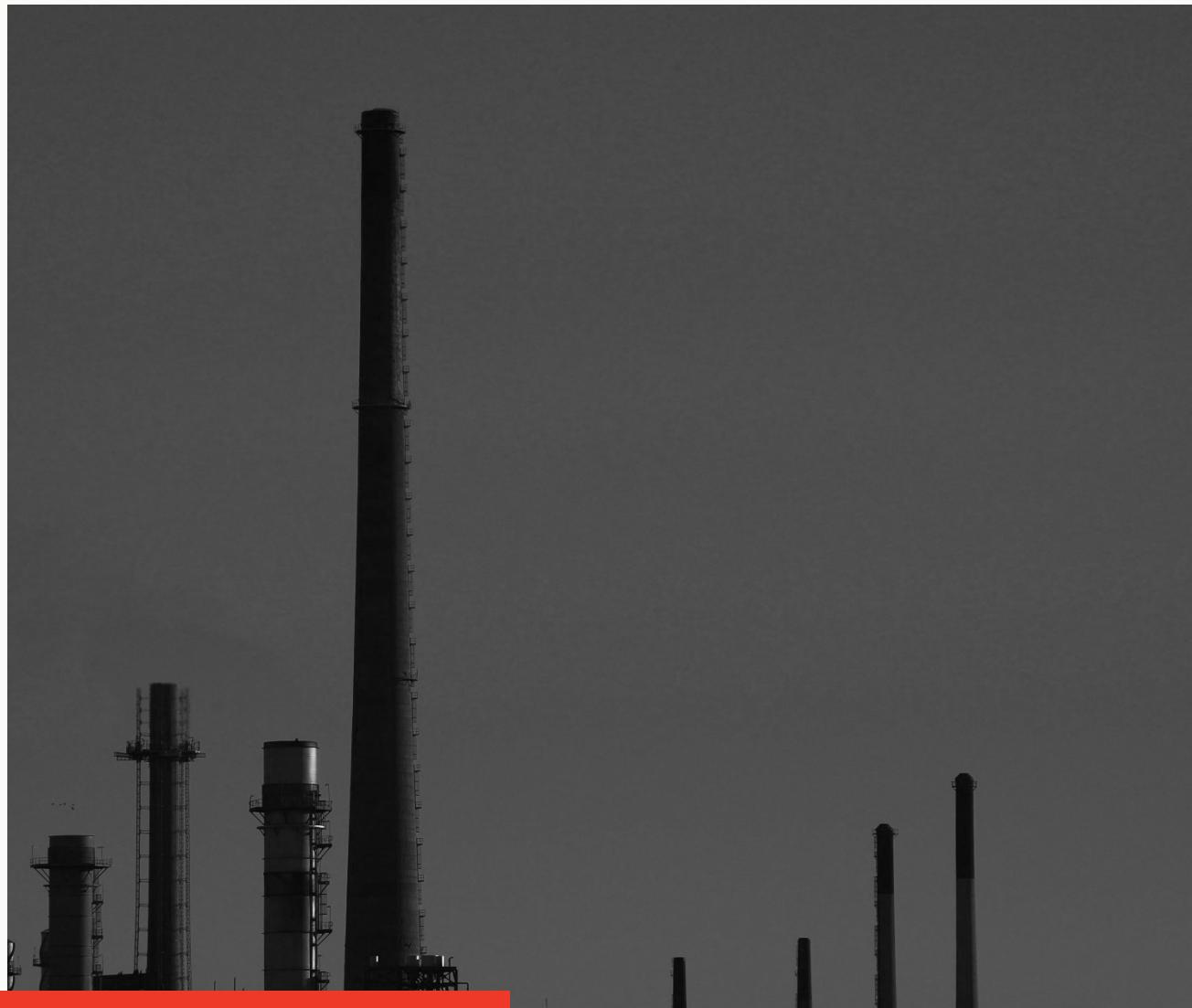| Early signal 🔔	→	Correction ☑
Everything progresses		Reassert controlled downside mandate

8

SUCCESS METRICS

LEADING INDICATORS

• Decisions happen on schedule

• Evidence is referenced explicitly

• Stop outcomes are visible

LAGGING INDICATORS

• Shorter Phase-One cycles

• Lower sunk cost per initiative

• Higher trust in governance

9

EXAMPLE USE CASES

This approach is typically used when:

• Leadership demands faster calls

• Early initiatives accumulate without resolution

• Validation produces mixed signals

• AI exploration needs firm prioritization

• Accelerators require clean progression logic

10

NEXT STEPS

After running Go / Hold / Stop decisions:

1.

Enforce outcomes
consistently

2.

Prevent re-entry
without new evidence

3.

Prepare escalation paths
for "go" decisions

**If decisions feel safe,
they are likely too late.**

11

CHECKLIST (CHEAT SHEET)

A. DECISION READINESS
☐ Evidence criteria were defined in advance
☐ Decision owner is clear
☐ Outcomes are reversible

B. EVIDENCE DISCIPLINE
☐ Evidence is shown independently of narrative
☐ Criteria have not changed
☐ Evidence is comparable

C. HOLD DISCIPLINE
☐ Hold conditions are explicit
☐ Hold is time-boxed
☐ Hold is not default

D. STOP DISCIPLINE
☐ Stops are explicit and documented
☐ No quiet carryover exists

E. GO DISCIPLINE
☐ Go decisions include conditions
☐ Remaining risks are named

FINAL CHECK
☐ Decisions are timely
☐ Stops occur regularly

If everything is a "go," Phase One is failing