Project Title



The Choice is Yours. Or is it? Tactics for making difficult decisions

Proprietary & Confidential

So let me share a story about a bad decision I made.

While I'm telling you this story, think about a bad decision you've made.

Because a lot of our framework for decision making is based on where we've been burned vs where we've been successful, its good to reflect.



Let's set the stage. I created a new platform team, gifted a good amount of code from our peer teams....

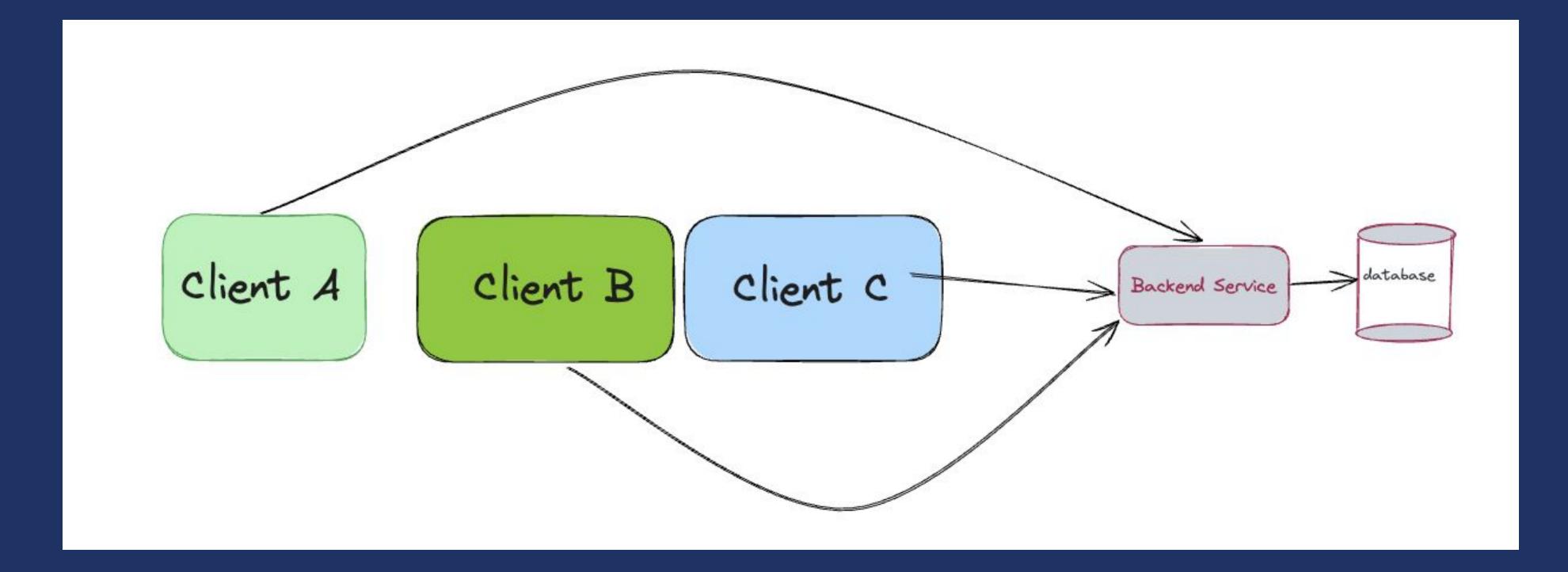
Including code bases that filtered content in so many ways and so many locations in the system architecture.



Our first goal as a new platform team was to consolidate the filtering logic into one shared framework.

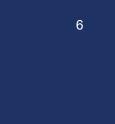


so the team was taking awhile to make a decision as to how we could create a singular shared framework for filtering, so i made a decision one casual monday morning to write a doc!





No biggie right?



No biggie right?

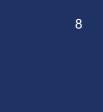
Uh no. The way I went about this decision was really bad.

Proprietary & Confidential



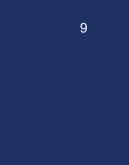
This decision, for this particular team, at this particular time, was wrong.

And it wasn't about the technical merit. There was a high social cost, that I paid. Years later, I still think how I went about this decision.



Making a (good) decision is so contextual.

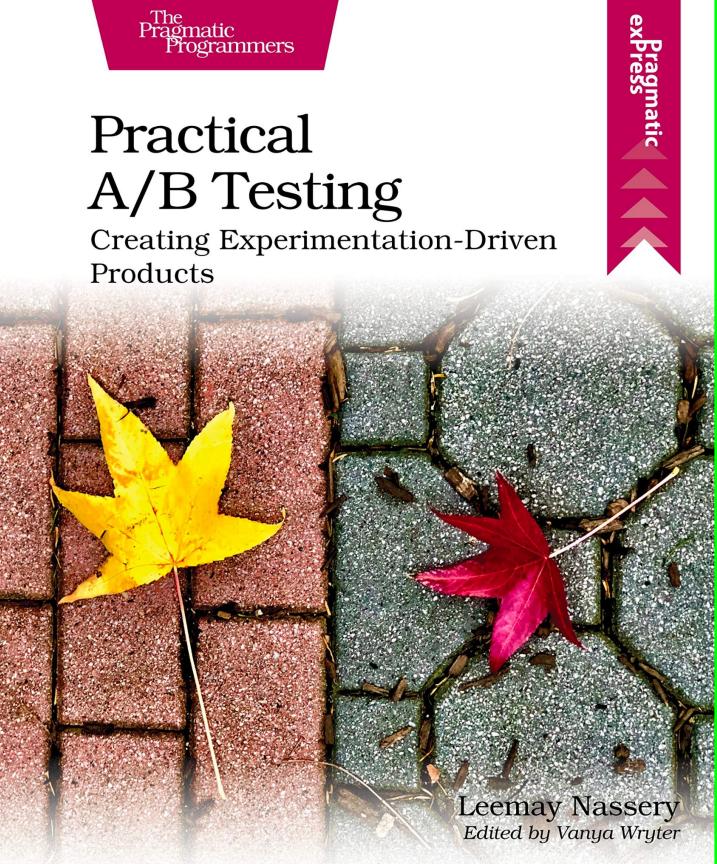
It's influenced by who, when, where, how.



In this talk we want to help you with your strategy for making impactful decisions as leaders of projects and teams.



Leemoly NCISSELV Senior Engineering Manager Author of Practical A/B Testing

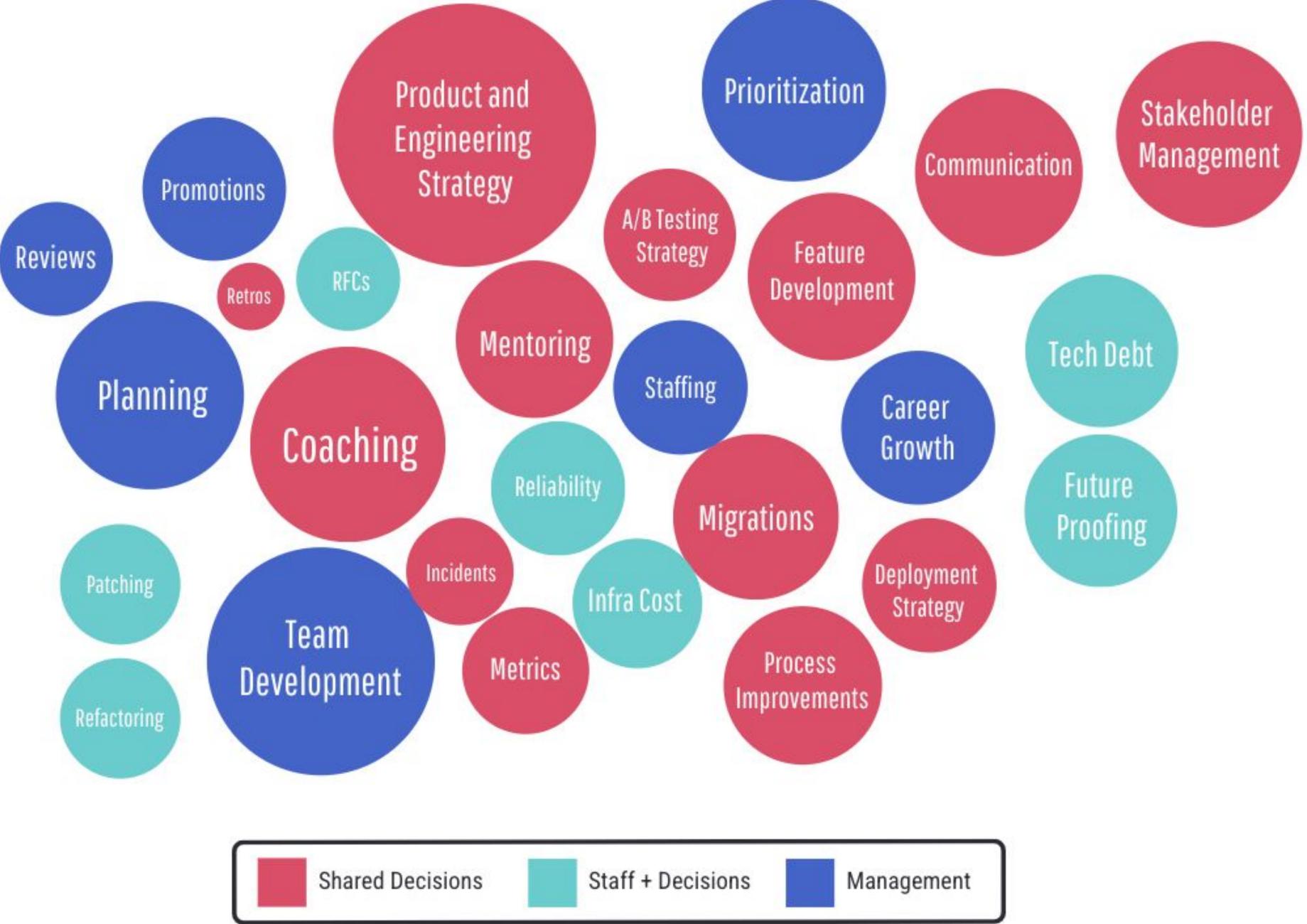


Emily Samuels Senior Staff Engineer

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Different types of decisions





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Shared Decisions

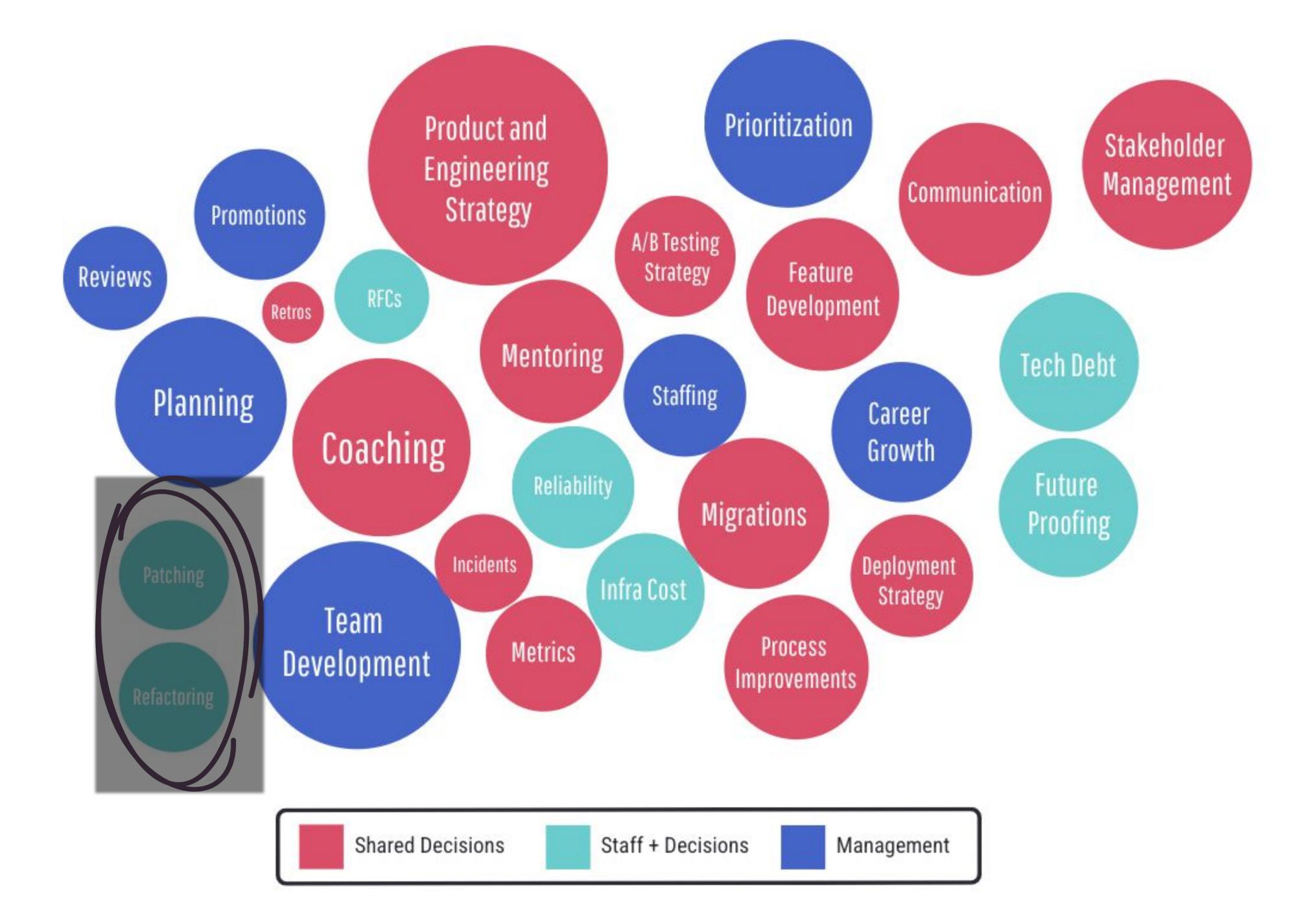
Staff + Decisions

Management

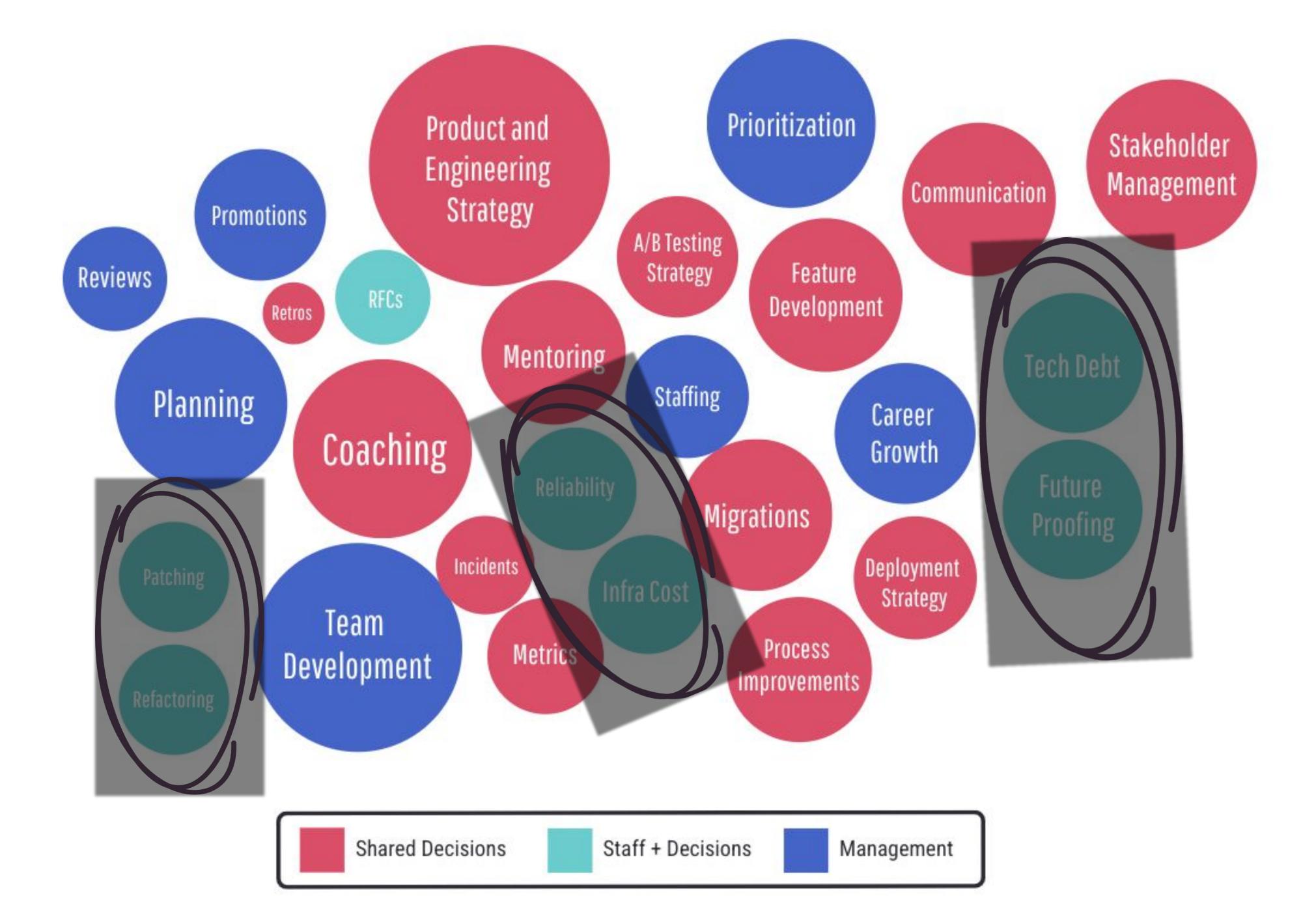








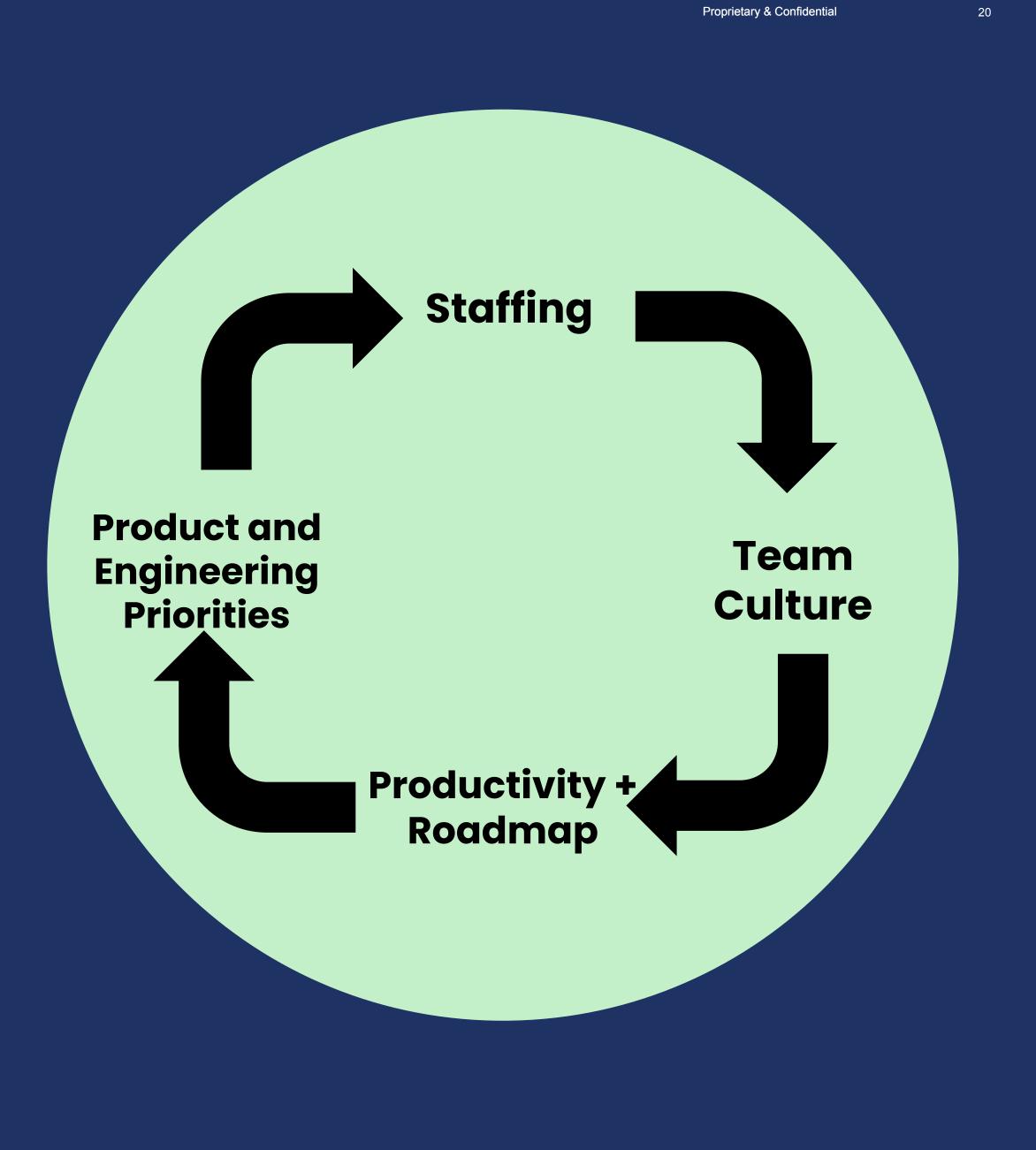


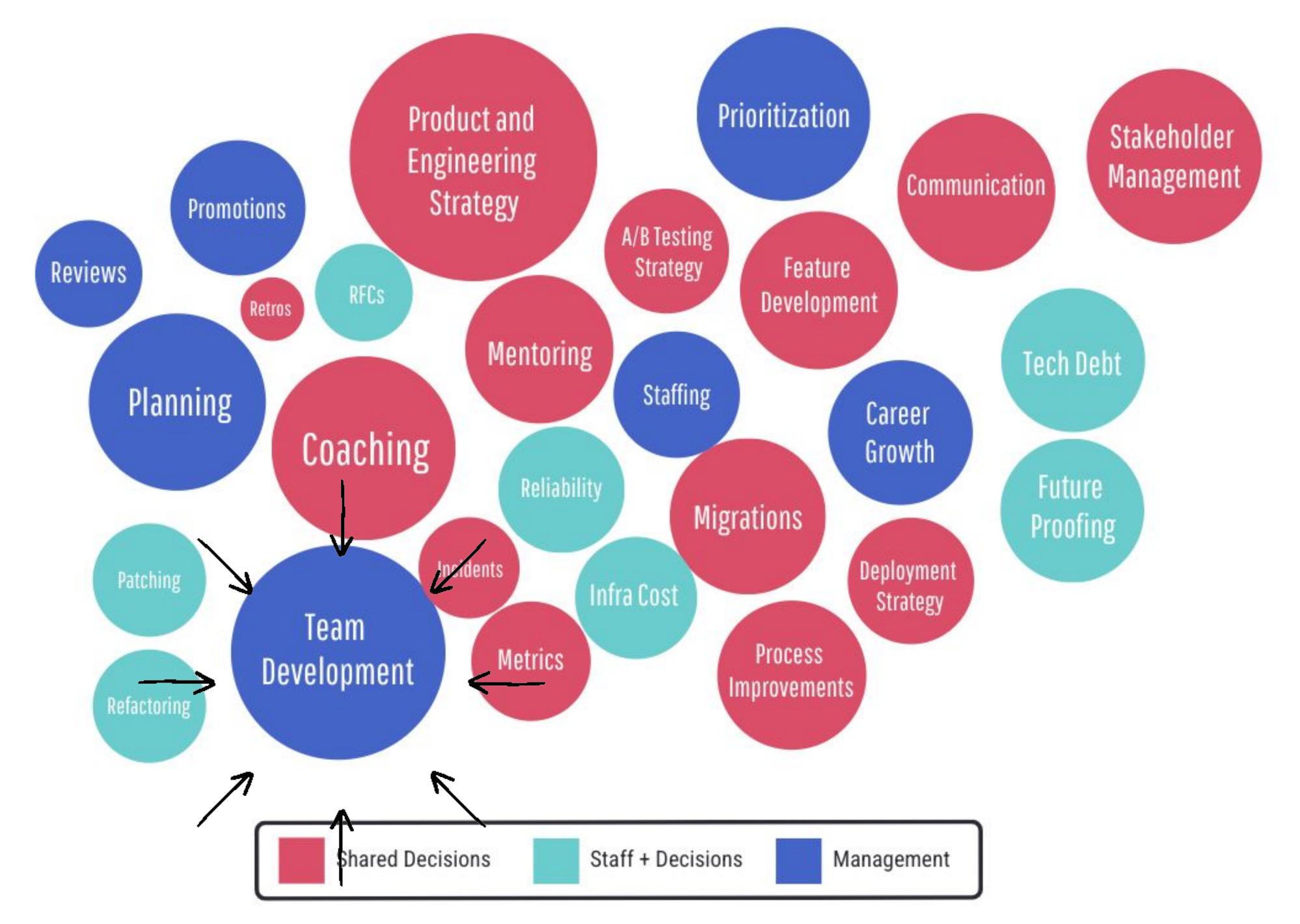




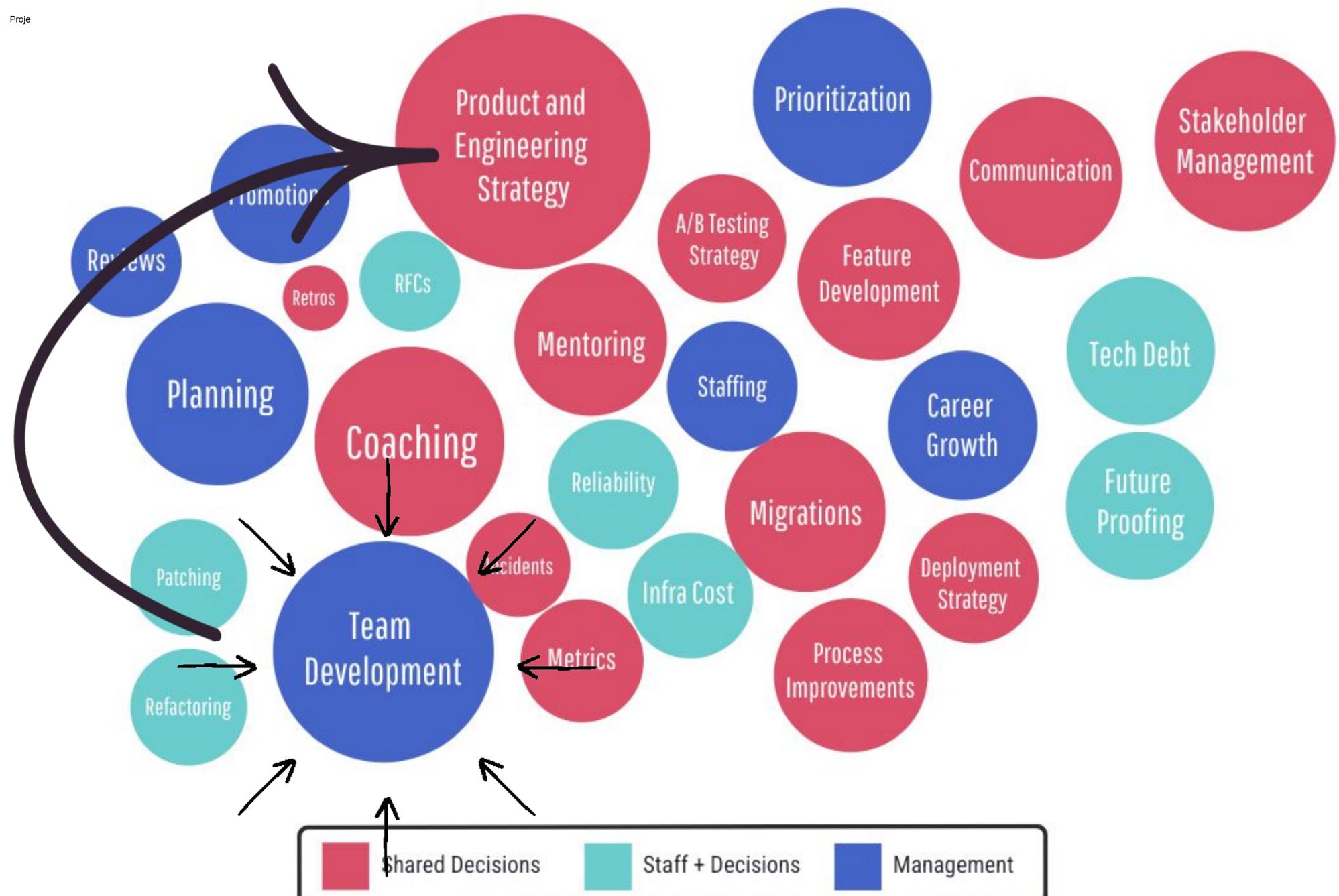
From the management standpoint, many of our decisions are made to influence the overarching goal of serving the companies vision and mission. 1

We're making many decisions that influence each other.









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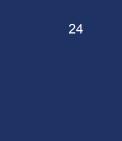


Tactics for making hard decisions



Some decisions are much harder to make.

Let's go through some case studies and how we navigated them.



Promoting a High-Potential Individual Despite Skepticism

Promoting a High-Potential Individual Despite Skepticism

Tactic: the challenge here is addressing skepticism while focusing on the potential and qualities of the individual being promoted.

Emphasize coaching and take accountability. Give your peers the confidence that you are investing in this person for XYZ reasons.



Committing to a Controversial Product Feature Despite (many) Objections

Committing to a Controversial Product Feature Despite (many) Objections

Tactic: address the reasoning for objection, while also painting an alternative view. whats the cost of trying something with the least amount of engineering effort?

Create a document to gain alignment. Define clear metrics for what success looks like. Time box the investment. A/B Test.



How to design, build, and drive adoption for a critical dataset



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Tactic: Prototype the design with mock data to get feedback



How to design, build, and drive adoption for a critical dataset

get feedback

Lots of 1:1 meetings, group presentations, and write ups explaining the data. Influence leadership to set data adoption goals.

Tactic: Prototype the design with mock data to



Making company-wide decisions on what technologies to use



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Tactic: Create a group of that represents various parts of the company to weigh in.



Making company-wide decisions on what technologies to use

parts of the company to weigh in.

Be transparent and clear when communicating the decision.

Tactic: Create a group of that represents various



Red flags to consider





Jumping to the complex solution first



Jumping to the complex solution first

team up for success.

Decision: Is there a more iterative path to get to your goal? Taking smaller steps help set your



Deciding on the what and the how





Deciding on the what and the how

Decision: Help the team understand what to build but empower them to decide how to build

Red flags indicating need for action

signs that suggest you need to MAKE a decision and take action on.



Engineers are rewriting similar documents throughout the project.

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Decision that NEEDS to be made: The project *clearly* lacks organization. You need to assign a Lead Engineer to the project to reduce the chaos.

Team members aren't using the correct terminology when describing specific domain constructs.

Team members aren't using the correct terminology when describing specific domain constructs.

This indicates a lack of understanding of the project.

Decision that NEEDS to be made: You need to establish knowledge share or onboarding methods to mitigate implementation risks.



A team closes off their support slack channel and adds a workflow for tickets to be created when support is needed.

A team closes off their support slack channel and adds a workflow for tickets to be created when support is needed.

> **Decision that NEEDS to be made**: The team may be overwhelmed with support requests, its time to revisit their system ownership, potentially reorg or add additional headcount to balance the load.





Deciding vs being informed



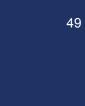
The most important thing we do as leads is make decisions.

But sometimes it's a better idea to just be informed (or slightly influence).



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In management, our world is people



In management, our world is people - do we have the right) individuals to build out our engineering and product strategy?

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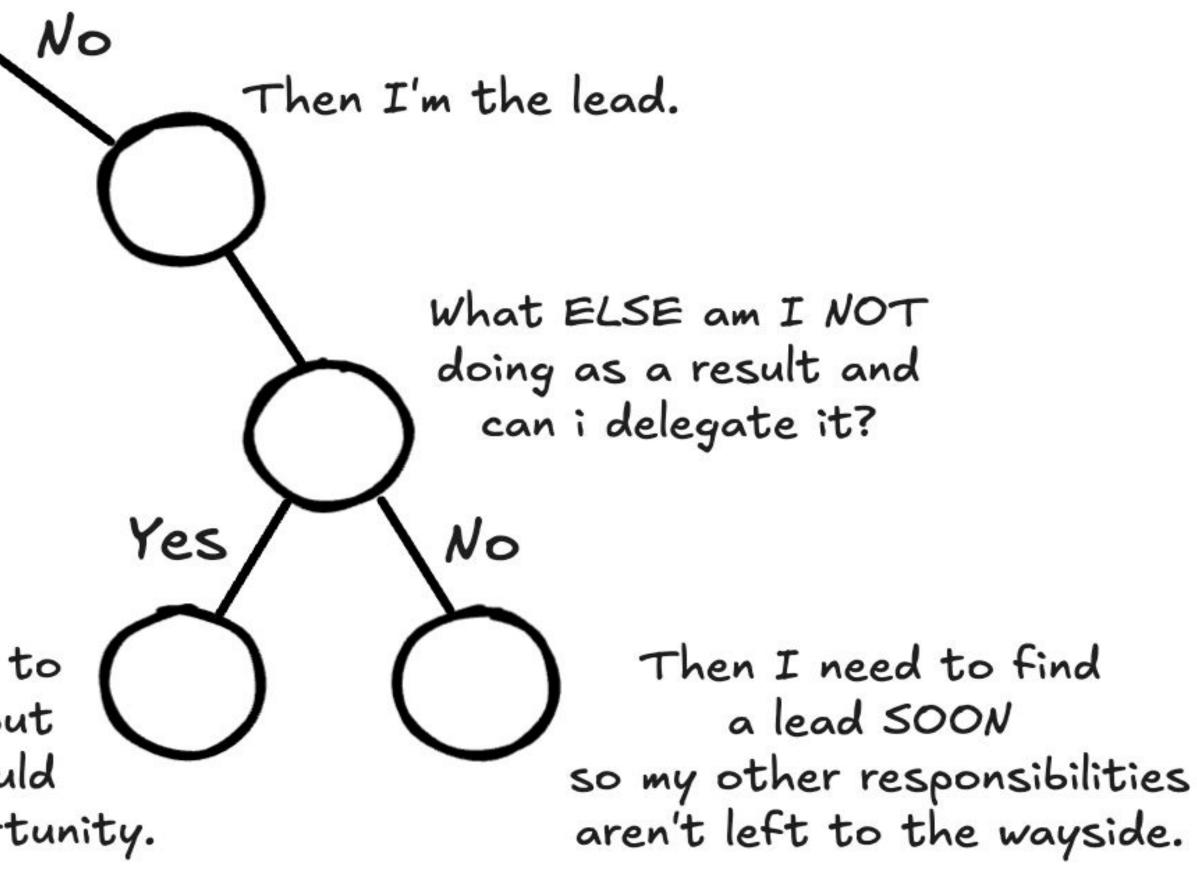
In relation to whether i should own a technical decision or project, this is my decision tree

Do I have a lead engineer or EM to own on the project?

Yes

Great! They own the decision as the lead of the project.

> I can continue to be the lead, but eventually should delegate the opportunity.





A decision needs to be made. Who decides?

f Can you delegate the decision?

 $_f$ is there a tight timeline?

Do you need to build buy in?

Do you need to quickly unblock the team?

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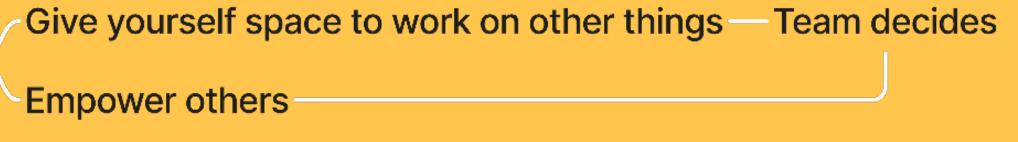
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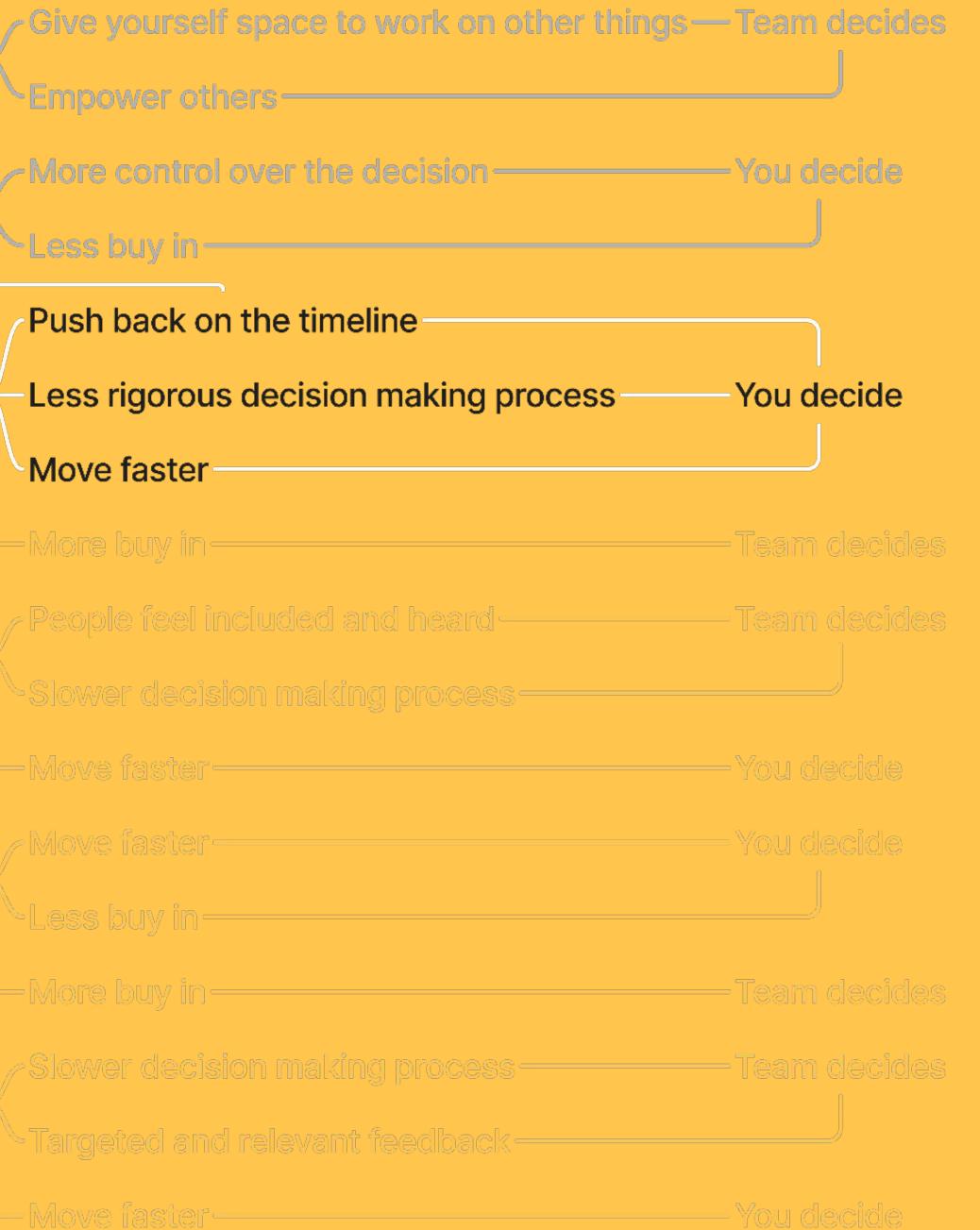


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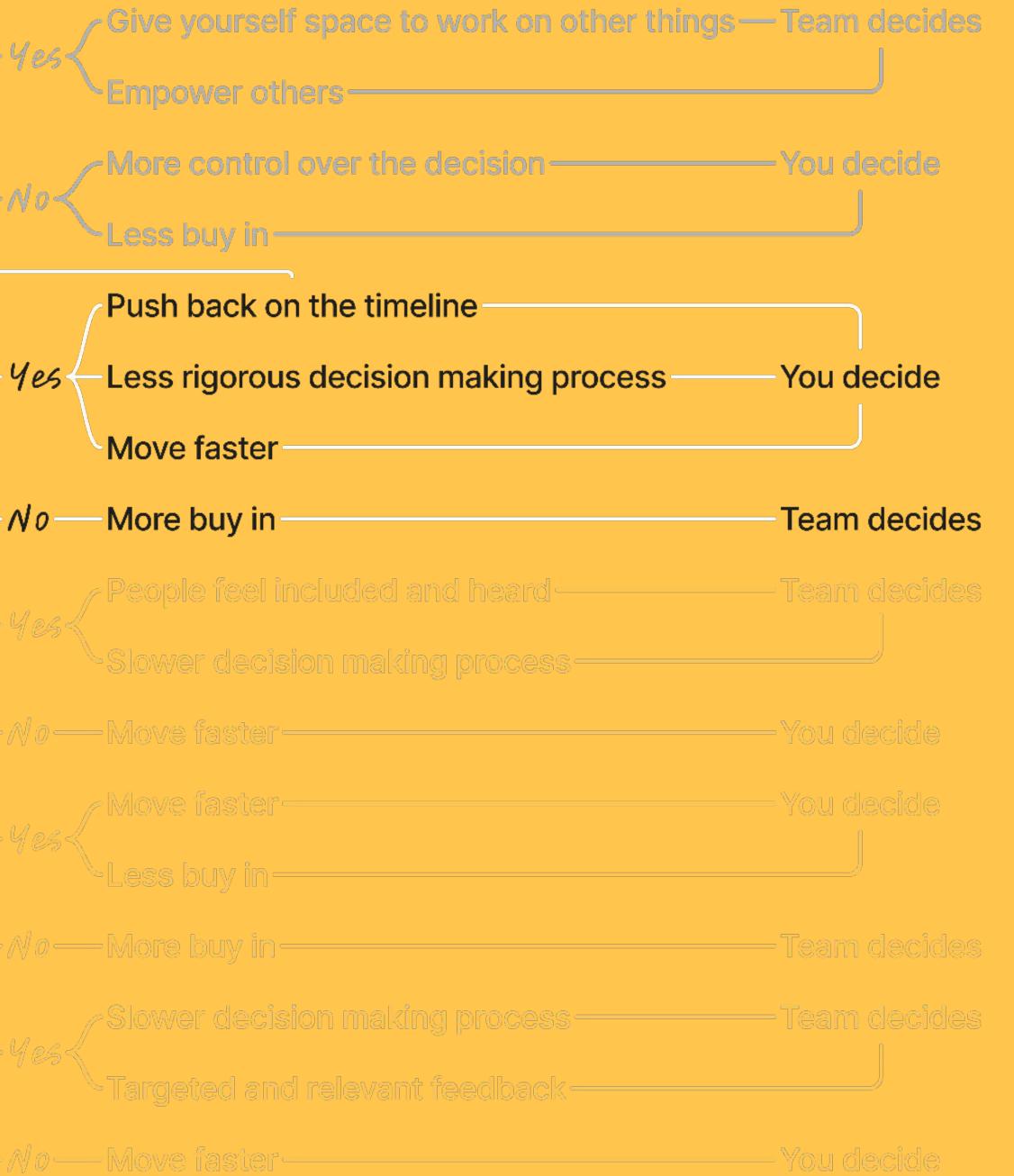




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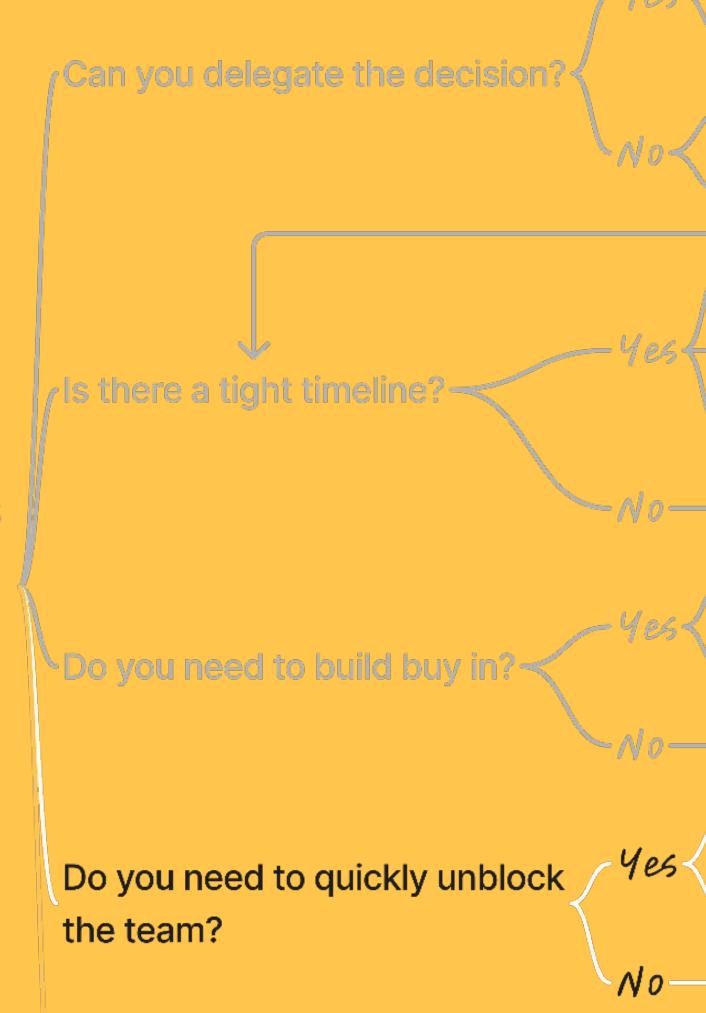
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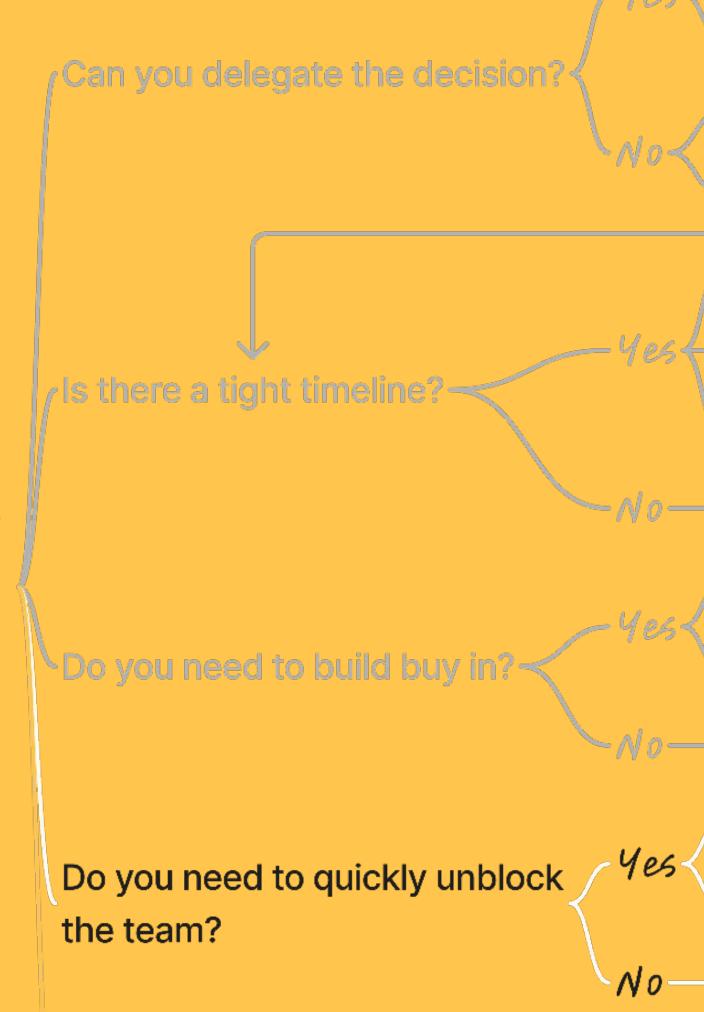
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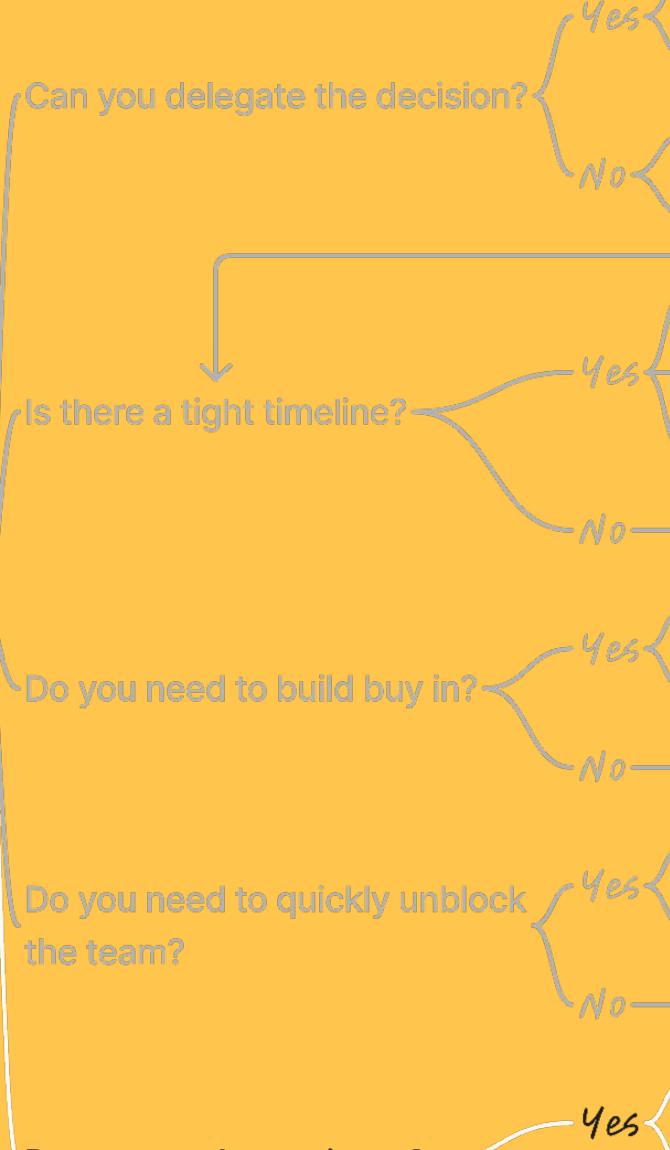
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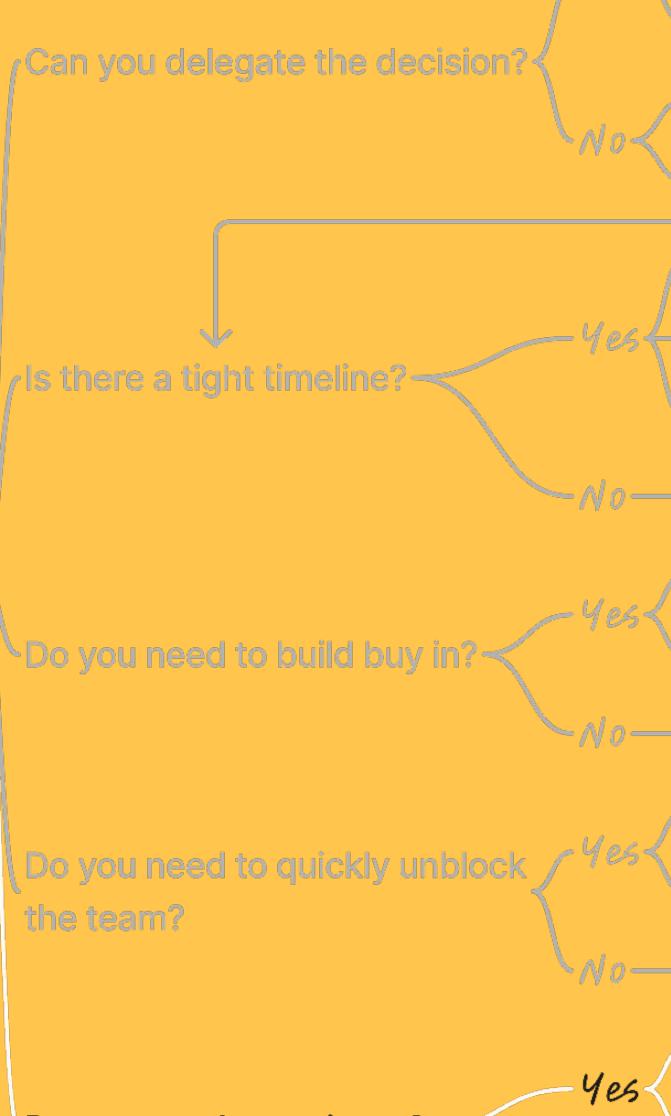


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Frameworks for Decision Making

Frameworks for decision making Sometimes you need a formal process for decision making



Cultivate your inner circle Find experts in different disciplines to ask for

- advice
- Use these folks to bounce ideas off of in a low stakes setting



Final Takeaways



Your decisions reflect your culture and values

What message does this send to people?



You can "rollback" decisions

Changing a decision is a **powerful** demonstration of effective and principled leadership.

Think about the past, how often has a leader said they reflected on a past decision and need to revert the decision they made? It is so rare!

Taking accountability while also "fixing" it is admirable.



Sometimes there is no right or wrong answer



When you can, explain why you're making the decision

There will be cases where you can't explain (i.e. legal), so take advantage of the situations where you can be transparent.

It will build trust and make up for the situations when you can't explain your decision.



Hindsight is 20/20 You will never have all the information you want to make a decision.



Spotify

Project Title

00.00.2015

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