

CHOICE ARCHITECTURE

How we organise the context in which people make decisions

Adapted from *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success in Work and Life, One Conversation at a Time* by Susan Scott (2004).

To delegate decision-making is a powerful way to build trust and grow emerging leaders. Susan Scott's 'decision tree' model is an ideal approach. There are four levels of decision – leaf, branch, trunk and root. Four stages of delegated trust in proportion to the degree of potential harm or good to the organisation as action is taken.

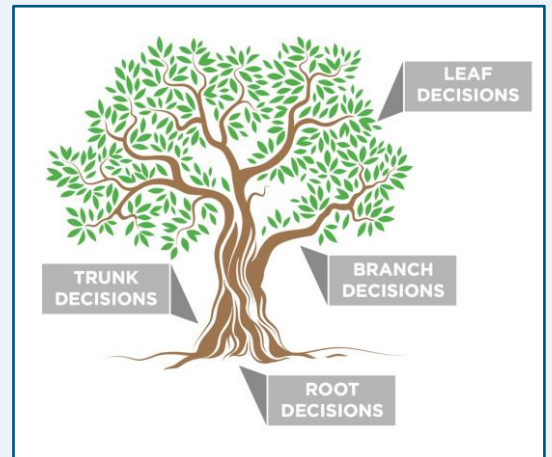
Leaf decisions: Make the decision. Act on it. Do not report the action you took.

Branch decisions: Make the decision. Act on it. Report the action you took.

Trunk decisions: Make the decision. Discuss your decision before you act on it. Report the action you took.

Root decisions: Discuss and make the decision jointly, with input from many people. These are the decisions that, if poorly made and implemented, could cause major harm to the organisation.

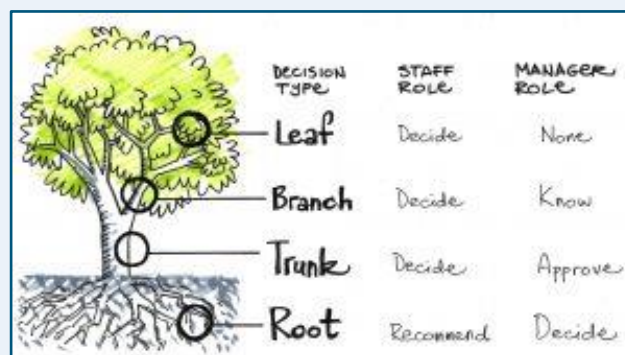
Understanding choice architecture releases people to take on greater levels of responsibility. The metaphors of leaf, branch, trunk and roots define levels of risk or potential harm to the organisation. Poor decisions at any level can hurt an organisation, but recovering from damaged leaves is much easier than recovering from damaged roots. The idea is to encourage our teams to move more and more decisions to the leaf and branch levels as their capacity and confidence grows.



BENEFITS

There are **four key benefits** to having a 'Decision Tree' conversation with our teams:

- Clarity about what categories various decisions and actions fall into.
- Clarity and confidence about what authority and responsibilities belong to each team member.
- A clearer upward path for professional development. Progress is made when responsibilities are moved up the various levels as staff gain experience and capacity to make better decisions.
- The decision tree model makes it easier to grow grassroots leadership from within our organisation. This also frees up leaders and executives to take on more challenging responsibilities themselves.



This is a great way to tell people where they are free to play and how they can grow. Best of all, your team will take on more responsibility and your own to-do list will shrink.

~ Susan Scott

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