

TOOL — FROM THE BOOK

The Four Names Diagnostic

Map the accountability of a decision in under an hour.

Before you sign off on a high-stakes decision, see who really decides: who does the work, who answers for it, who pays, who can change the rules. One sheet. Four names. No debate.

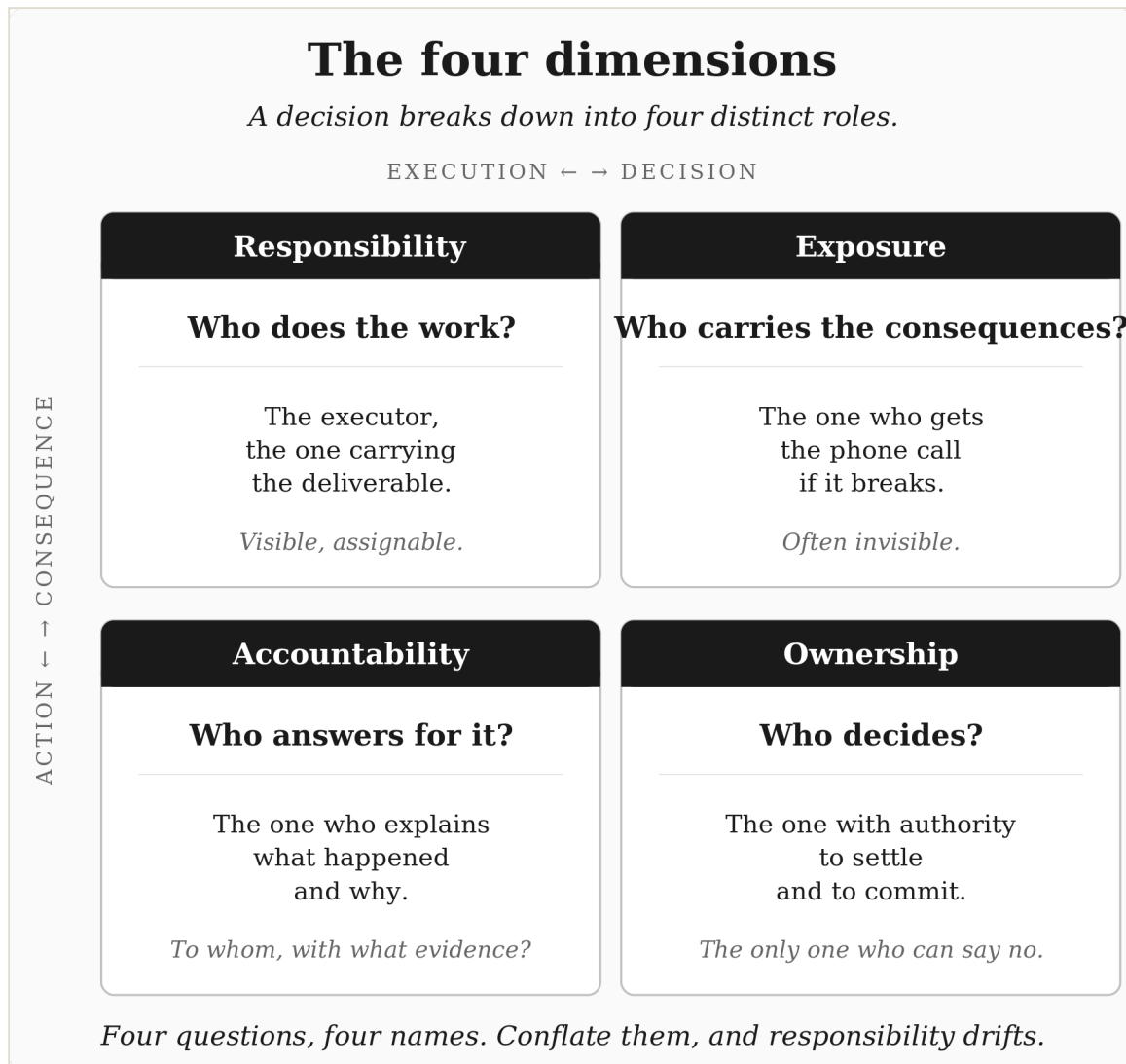


The book this tool is drawn from.

Responsibility doesn't vanish. It moves.

In any organization that grows, responsibility drifts from floor to floor without anyone deciding it. A project derails, a contract unravels, and we ask, too late, who made the call?

This tool makes the movement visible before it gets expensive. A decision breaks down into four distinct roles. As long as they're conflated, the load slides to those with the least power to refuse it.



The four dimensions of responsibility, from the book.

Print and fill in

DECISION UNDER REVIEW

DATE

The central assumption that must be true for the plan to hold:

Then break it on purpose. What happens?

RESPONSIBILITY

Who does the work?

Name :

The executor, the one carrying the deliverable day to day.

EXPOSURE

Who carries the consequences?

Name :

The one who gets the phone call if it breaks. Often invisible.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Who answers for it?

Name :

The one who explains what happened, and why.

OWNERSHIP

Who decides?

Name :

The one with authority to settle. The only one who can say no.

THE THREE CONTROL QUESTIONS — A NAME, NOT A ROLE

Who pays when it breaks?

Who decides? (the one who can change the rules, not the signatory)

Who knows? (is the knower in the room?)

The tool or algorithm in the chain — where is it, what does it decide in whose place?

Verdict — do the names converge? If not, write the divergence:

30-day review:

The filled sheet — Bernard's case

DECISION UNDER REVIEW

Cybersecurity investment: intrusion-detection system (€3M)

DATE

—

The central assumption that must be true for the plan to hold:

“The system reduces risk without creating a blind spot.”

Then break it on purpose. What happens?

RESPONSIBILITY

Who does the work?

Name : **Lopez (security engineer, deployment)**

The executor, the one carrying the deliverable day to day.

EXPOSURE

Who carries the consequences?

Name : **Mariotti (compliance)**

The one who gets the phone call if it breaks. Often invisible.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Who answers for it?

Name : **Van Damme (head of IT security)**

The one who explains what happened, and why.

OWNERSHIP

Who decides?

Name : **Bouchard (operations director)**

The one with authority to settle. The only one who can say no.

THE THREE CONTROL QUESTIONS — A NAME, NOT A ROLE

Who pays when it breaks? **Mariotti — in practice, compliance takes the bill.**

Who decides? (the one who can change the rules, not the signatory) **Bouchard — if he changes the blocking rules, the algorithm no longer decides the same way.**

Who knows? (is the knower in the room?) **Lopez knows the ground, but he isn't in the decision room.**

The tool or algorithm in the chain — where is it, what does it decide in whose place?

The detection system blocks access in the human's place; up to 60% false positives, supervision at risk.

Verdict — do the names converge? If not, write the divergence: Mariotti and Bouchard appear nowhere in the contract (only Van Damme and Lopez do). “The organization” is not an answer.

30-day review: Revisit after the blocking rules are recalibrated.

The example is from the book: an audit decision that two names were enough to sign, while the two missing names were the ones carrying the risk.

In five steps

1. Pick a high-stakes decision, ideally one passing its charter this week.
2. Write the central assumption that must be true, then break it on purpose.
3. Place the four names. One person's name per role, never a department.
4. Run the three control questions: who pays, who decides, who knows.
5. Write the divergences and set a 30-day review.

The golden rules

- A name, not a role. If the answer is “the organization”, it isn't an answer.
- Who decides is the one who can change the rules while others play, not the one who signs.
- The knower must have a direct channel to the decider, at no career cost.
- Bring who pays and who decides together before signing. If you can't, write the divergence.

Common pitfalls

- Confusing the function with the person. The classic RACI trap.
- Settling for “the organization” as the answer to “who pays?”.
- Running the diagnosis after the crisis, instead of before signing.
- The beautiful matrix you admire too late. Write while doing, not after.

Where this tool comes from

The sheet borrows from the one-page canvas (Business Model Canvas), from decision-rights assignment (RACI, Bain's RAPID) which it hardens by demanding a name and adding “who pays”, and from the decision journal popularized after Kahneman. The “break the central assumption” move comes from Gary Klein's premortem. And if it takes the form of a sheet you fill while doing, rather than a matrix you admire afterward, that's deliberate: the book tells you why pretty matrices end up in a drawer.

The decision journal

When the one who pays isn't the one who decides and you can't bring them together, write the divergence. The journal repairs nothing, but it protects you the day someone asks who knew. Seven short fields, one Monday re-read. The rule: never correct, only add.

Decision journal

Seven short headings. Three narrative sections. A Monday-morning reread.

Decision			
<i>One line. What was decided, by whom, and when.</i>			
Level	Cancellation cost		
R Reversible C Compensable I Irreversible	<i>Empty if R.</i> <i>Documented at signing if C.</i> <i>Unbounded if I.</i>		
Who pays	Who decides	Who knows	Who does
<i>By name.</i> <i>Who suffers</i> <i>if it fails.</i>	<i>By name.</i> <i>Who can change</i> <i>the course.</i>	<i>By name.</i> <i>Who sees</i> <i>first.</i>	<i>By name.</i> <i>The concrete</i> <i>executor.</i>
— three narrative sections —			
Identified uncertainties			
<i>What we didn't know at the time of deciding.</i> <i>Distinct from what we hoped for.</i>			
Re-examination trigger			
<i>What signal, threshold or date should reopen the decision?</i>			
Invisible absorption			
<i>The name of the person who takes on what was never formally assigned.</i> <i>Often invisible. Always nameable.</i>			
<i>Monday morning: go back to the previous month.</i> <i>Look for patterns. Never correct.</i> <i>If there's nothing to reread, you can stop writing.</i>			

The decision journal, from the book. To copy out or print.

The book

This sheet is one of the tools in “Who Made the Call?”, co-written by Jean-Paul Delmeire and Peter Janssens. The book unfolds the framework, the four true stories, and the practices to correct the drift.

Who Made the Call?

How Responsibility Migrates — And Who Pays the Price. Available in English and French, in paperback and digital.

Discover the book: [\[Adilea Publishing link\]](#)

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