

USE THIS BEFORE A BEYOND-THE-NORM DECISION — CHAPTER 15

When The Rulebook Runs Out

Every process has a limit. When you reach it, there's no script, and no handbook. This worksheet helps you make better judgement calls — and own them fully.

BEFORE YOU DECIDE — UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION

THE SITUATION

What's happened, and why does the normal process not cover it?

Be specific. What rule or policy has run out?

THE PRECEDENT QUESTION

What will your team learn about the real rules if you make this call?

It's never just one decision. Every call teaches the team where the lines actually sit.

DURING — THE THREE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE YOU ACT

If you're waiting for someone else to make the decision, ask yourself whether you're actually the person best placed to make it. **The person closest to the problem usually has the best information. Start there.**

1

What does this person actually need right now?

2

What solution is fair to the customer, fair to the business, and something you can defend tomorrow?

3

Who else needs to know — and when will you tell them?

THE THIRD OPTION

Am I choosing between the two obvious answers — or is there a third?

The policy says no. The customer wants yes. The best decision is often neither. What else is possible?

AFTER — OWN IT FULLY**THE DECISION****What did you decide — and why?**

Write it down as if you're explaining it to your manager tomorrow. Clear, specific, defensible.

THE TEAM DEBRIEF**How will you explain this decision to your team — so nobody confuses judgement with inconsistency?**

What you say afterwards shapes what they learn. Did you make an exception, or did you exercise judgement? There's a difference — and your team needs to hear it.

THE OWNERSHIP CHECK**Did you make the decision because it was right — or because someone else told you to?**

Be honest. Did you make the call, or were you still hoping someone else would decide?

THE LESSON**What does this situation reveal about where the process has a gap?**

Is this something you need to flag, clarify, or communicate so the team is better prepared next time?

FOR NEXT TIME**What would you do differently — and what will you do the same?**

REMEMBER

When the rulebook runs out, leadership begins. The authority didn't arrive the day you made your first difficult decision. It arrived the day you were promoted. You just hadn't believed it yet.