

P I T T S B U R G H P R O D U C T C A M P · M A Y 2 0 2 6

Not My Problem.

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Who owns this?

In matrixed orgs, the most common answer is silence.



Three failure modes.

Different teams. Same disease.

0 1

Handoff theater.

Teams write requirements and pass them along. Success means “handed off,” not “worked.”

0 2

Update chasing.

Leadership reconstructs reality from five tools — and the answer changes per tool.

0 3

Decorative dashboards.

Reports built for an exec to look at — not for a team to act on.

W H A T ' S R E A L L Y B R O K E N

**Programs do not fail because hard
decisions cannot be made.**

**They fail because nobody knows
whose decision it is.**

rickpollick.com · Status Reports That Lie

T H E F I X

The fix is three words.

0 1 **See it.** *visibility*

0 2 **Own it.** *ownership*

0 3 **Move it.** *cadence*

0 1 · S E E I T

Visibility is the intervention.

Build the view that drives a decision today — not the view that looks reassuring next quarter.

Replace the red/yellow/green circle with the three things underneath it: **open decisions, aging dependencies, blocked work.**

Design for the persona who has to act on it. Exec, delivery lead, engineer — three views, one source.

OPEN DECISION

Which auth provider for v2?

OWNER

M. Alvarez

DECISION DATE

Fri 22 May

Aging 4 days · No blockers

The heatmap.

One page. Every open decision. Sorted by age. Owner and decide-by visible — or visibly missing.

DECISION	OWNER	DECIDE BY	AGE
Auth provider for v2	M. Alvarez	Fri 22 May	4 days
API rate-limit policy	T. Wright	Thu 28 May	6 days
Tier 2 SLA target	K. Park	Mon 25 May	8 days
Region 3 GA date	S. Chen	Wed 27 May	12 days
Vendor for billing	—	—	23 days
Migration cutover	—	—	41 days

Sort by age. Longest-open on top.

Color by lifespan. Green fresh, red stale.

Empty owner cells. Problem statements, not decisions.

Three views. One source.

Same data. Different cuts. Each one prompts a decision only that persona can make.

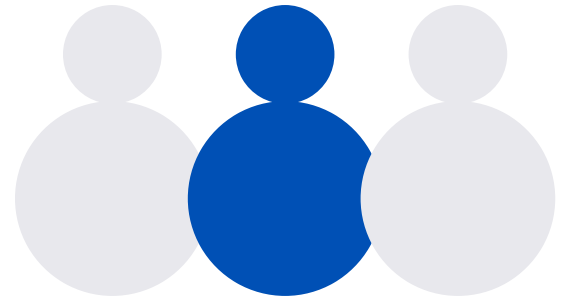
P E R S O N A	W H A T T H E Y S E E	W H A T T H E Y D E C I D E
Exec	What's at risk · what needs me · what changed	Scope. Resource. Stop.
Delivery lead	What's blocked · who owns it · what's aging	Sequence. Escalate. Unblock.
Engineer	What's mine today · what changed · what's next	Approach. Ship. Flag risks.

One name. No committees.

Every open decision and every blocker has exactly one named owner.

Not a team. Not “Eng leadership.” **A person.**

If you can't name them, you don't have an owner.
You have a problem statement that needs one.



one name.

A date the answer must exist.

Every decision gets a due date for the decision itself — not the work that follows.

“We'll follow up offline” is not a date.

Publish the dates. Decision latency drops. Not by 10%. By half.

MAY 2026

11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25

Decision due.

Owner. Decision. Date.

Three fields. Published. Visible to everyone. That's the whole system.



How an open decision becomes a closed one.

0 1

Owner.

One name. Not a team.

If you can't name them, that's the work.

0 2

Decision.

A specific call to make.

Not a status. A call.

0 3

Date.

When the answer is due.

Not the ship date.

Then the org chart writes itself.

Run the system for a quarter. People start being deciders — and the patterns show up.

0 1 **Deciders surface.**

The people who actually close decisions emerge. Sometimes they're not on the org chart.

0 2 **Domains cluster.**

Recurring decisions group around the same names. Areas of influence become legible.

0 3 **Bottlenecks show.**

One name on nine open decisions isn't a hero. It's a capacity problem the org needs to fix.

0 4 **Responsibilities tighten.**

Roles snap to who actually closes loops — not who's nominally accountable.

What it looks like in the wild.

B E F O R E

Large program. Red on the status report for nine weeks. Sponsors had asked “what do you need?” three times. We had answered “nothing” three times. Forty-seven green indicators. Two red.

C H A N G E

Replace the dashboard with one page: open decisions, named owner, decision date. Nothing else.

W E E K 1

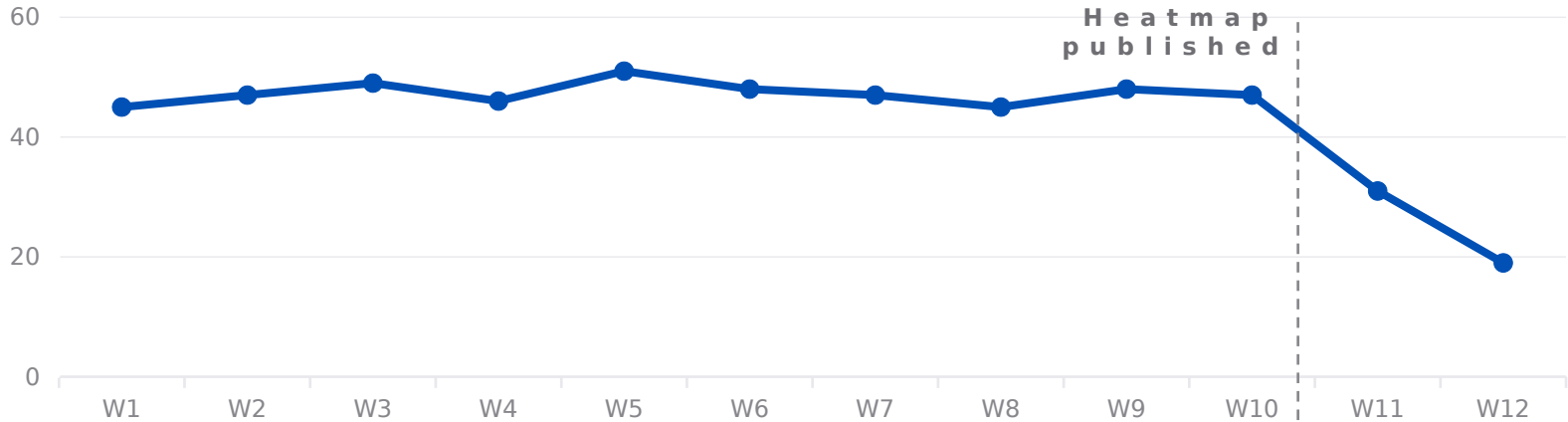
Eleven decisions resolved. Two had been open for over a quarter.

I N S I G H T

Nobody had been blocking the decisions. Nobody knew they could make them.

Publish it. Watch the line.

Average days to decide on an open issue. One program. Twelve weeks. Heatmap published at week 10.



-60%
Decision latency

11
Decisions resolved

<2 wks
First effect

What to do Monday.

0 1 **Pick one program.**

List every open decision. Force one name next to each.

0 2 **Add a decision date.**

When the decision must exist — not when the work ships.

0 3 **Show it. Don't email it.**

Open the page on a call. Team and sponsor, same view.

0 4 **Watch the 7-day change.**

Then do it for the next program. And the next.

Coach, don't command. Make the new behavior visible. Praise the second person to try it. Instrument, don't grade.

Thank you



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The best answers are probably
already in the room.

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