

INSTITUTE BRIEF – MAY 2026

The cost of the slow decision

Slow decisions are not a culture problem. They are an unpriced cost line.

Quantifying decision latency across 40 organisations, with a method for pricing your own.

SAMPLE

n = 40

OBSERVATION PERIOD

2024–2026

EXTENT

12 pages · full edition

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RECORD · BRIEF

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ABOUT THE MARKHAM INSTITUTE

The Institute is the research arm of Markham Consulting. It maintains the outcome dataset, stewards the framework library, and publishes its methods in full – so the thinking can be audited before it is paid for. Positions are argued, priced, and open to challenge.

IN THE FULL EDITION

12 pages · v1.0 · Current

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02	Where the weeks go	4 pages	p . 07
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Pagination refers to the full edition. The excerpt reproduces the executive summary, headline exhibit and method notes only.

Slow decisions are not a culture problem. They are an unpriced cost line.

Across 40 organisations we timed the interval between a decision becoming necessary and the decision being communicated. The median organisation loses nine working weeks a year to decisions waiting in queues – not being analysed, simply waiting for a forum with the authority to decide. At mid-market scale that latency prices out between \$2M and \$14M a year.

This brief publishes the measurement method in full. Latency is read out of calendars, approval trails and minutes – no interviews. The brief walks through the four highest-cost decision classes and prices a worked example, so a reader can run the same arithmetic on their own organisation in under a week.

“The organisations were not waiting to know more. They were waiting for someone to be allowed to decide.”

Median decision latency by ownership

n = 40 · 2024-2026



Days from decision-necessary to decision-communicated, by ownership structure. Full method and cohort definitions in the closing chapter of the report.

01

9 wks

Median working time per year that decisions spend waiting in queues.

02

34 d

Median latency for cross-functional decisions – against 4 days under a named owner.

03

\$6.8M

Median annual carrying cost of decision latency in the sample.

04

71%

Share of latency caused by missing decision rights, not missing information.

Every figure is measured against a frozen month-0 baseline and re-tested at month 12 before publication. No figure on this page is self-reported.

The findings, as Monday-morning decisions.

a Time your last ten significant decisions from necessity to communication. That number is your baseline.

b Separate latency caused by missing information from latency caused by missing authority. Authority is the larger problem by a factor of three.

c Give every recurring decision class a single named owner. Shared ownership is measured here as unowned.

d Put the remaining decisions on a fixed cadence, so they wait days for a scheduled forum rather than weeks for an improvised one.

HOW THE NUMBERS ARE MADE

SAMPLE	40 organisations, \$50M-\$500M revenue. Each contributed a minimum of 60 timed decisions.
MEASUREMENT	Latency read from calendars, approval trails and minutes – necessity to communication. No self-reporting.
PRICING	Carrying cost priced against the value case of the delayed work item, discounted for attribution.
INSTRUMENT	Published as the Decision Velocity Index (MKM-F-007); may be applied without licence.

CITATION

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STANDARDS APPLIED

Baselines frozen under change control · one attribution line per benefit · independent evidence review · twelve-month survival re-test. The full standard is published as MKM-F-003 and may be applied without licence.

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