

Why Good Decisions Arrive at the Workplace Unrecognisable

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By Howard Murray

Most of us have stood in a finished workplace and felt the gap between what was promised and what got built. The instinct is to look at delivery. In my experience, that's rarely where the problem started. Over twenty-five years, on both the client and provider sides, I've watched the same thing happen again and again.

A decision that made complete sense when it was made, arriving somewhere else entirely by the time it reaches the people who have to make it real.

A leadership team agrees something sensible. Reduce the estate, and improve how it feels to work here. Everyone leaves the room aligned. The decision is coherent, the intent is clear and the ambition feels achievable.

Then it starts its journey.

Not because anything has gone wrong, but because organisations have to make decisions operational. As the conversation moves through regions, functions and delivery teams, it acquires assumptions, dependencies, sequencing decisions and local interpretation. Each step is reasonable. Each solves a problem that genuinely needs solving.

The difficulty is that nobody is looking at what those reasonable decisions are doing to the whole.

Months later, the estate has been consolidated. The financial target has been achieved. Yet the experience

falls short of what leadership believed they had agreed. It is tempting to conclude that delivery missed the brief. That is rarely where the drift began.

The decision lost coherence long before delivery started.

That is one of the reasons I believe workplace has a distinctive contribution to make. We sit at the point where strategic intent finally becomes something people experience every day. By then, every assumption, compromise and dependency has accumulated in one place. We are often among the first to see when the outcome no longer reflects the original ambition.

For me, that changes the role of the workplace leader. It is not simply to deliver the brief. It is to notice when the brief itself is beginning to change, and to have the confidence to bring that conversation back while there is still something to preserve.

Because once strategy becomes a building, the organisation has already shown you what it really decided.