FROM MARGIN TO MAINSTREAM:

Designing a way-of-working to move strategic ideas from margin to mainstream at Royal Schiphol Group

Strategic Product Design
Master thesis

Meike Overdijk

Schiphol

TU Delft

Designing a Way-of-Working to move ideas from margin to mainstream at Royal Schiphol Group

Author
M.E. (Meike) Overdijk

Master thesis
MSc. Strategic Product Design
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

In collaboration with
Royal Schiphol Group

Supervisory team

Chair	Prof.mr.dr.ir. S.C. (Sicco) Santema
Mentor	Ir. A.S. (Aniek) Toet
Company mentor	J. (Jonathan) De Bruijne
Company mentor	Y. (Yannick) Enting

March, 2025

PREFACE

Dear reader,

"*From margin to mainstream? What does that even mean?*" I'll admit, many times I found myself wondering the same thing. I hope that after reading this report, you will better understand the meaning of this conceptual title.

First of all, I would like to thank Aniek and Sicco, my supervisory team from the TU Delft. Aniek, thank you for your guidance, both personal and academic. I always looked forward to our enjoyable meetings, although I must admit, there was always a hint of nervousness about your critical eye, which I believe is a good thing. Sicco, thank you for sharing your experiences with me. I've learned more about change management through our enlightening conversations than I ever could from researching the well-known theories. After all, change management is truly about people, isn't it?

A big thank you, Jonathan and Yannick, my mentors at Schiphol. Jonathan, thank you for the brainstorming sessions that, despite often running over time, were always insightful (and I apologize for the extended meetings). Yannick, your ability to keep my project lighthearted and grounded was of great value.

I also want to extend my thanks to the Innovation Hub and Master Planning team colleagues, whose openness and willingness to share their perspectives helped shape this project.

Also, a special thank you to my dear grandpa, who visited the office and generously shared his wisdom on organizational change. This was truly a highlight.

Being able to focus on the complexities of a large organization so early in my career has been a truly valuable experience. I enjoyed exploring the ins and outs of a large organization like Royal Schiphol Group. It has been a true behind-the-scenes journey, and I think I've seen the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Creating a concise report from six months of research and design has been a challenge, but here we are. The design of this report was inspired by the soft, pinkish-blue hues I often admired during my morning walks to SHG in the winter months. Toward the end of my project, my committee challenged me to be braver in presenting my final solution, without over-explaining every detail with evidence. As a result, the report gradually transitions to a deeper red, symbolizing that shift.

I hope you enjoy reading my graduation thesis!

Meike Overdijk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like many other organizations, Royal Schiphol Group (RSG) faces a persistent challenge of strategy myopia: urgent operational demands overshadow long-term strategic ambitions. A clear example is RSG's vision to become a multimodal transport hub (MTH): despite its strategic importance, it is mentioned only a handful of times in recent annual reports and has failed to gain organizational traction. This reflects a broader issue at RSG: strategic initiatives consistently lack the visibility, momentum, and broad organizational support they need.

The objective of this research was to explore the organizational dynamics that influence why some strategic initiatives at RSG successfully move from margin to mainstream and others stall.

A qualitative approach was used, combining unstructured interviews with employees (N=11) across strategic, operational, and innovation roles, and three generative design workshops mapping timelines of past change initiatives. Thematic analysis revealed three themes: (1) The duality of urgency: both necessary and unfavorable for strategic change, (2) misalignment between long-term strategy and day-to-day operations and (3) the importance of clear ownership and influence of key stakeholders.

The insights showed that fragmented urgency perceptions among RSG employees prevents strategic initiatives from gaining traction. Long-term projects often fail to align with the immediate priorities of influential decision-makers, resulting in low urgency and minimal stakeholder involvement.

To address this challenge, this thesis introduces a way-of-working that:

1. Identifies and maps key internal stakeholders, distinguishing those with the greatest influence over the initiative.
2. Assesses the perceived urgency of influential stakeholders
3. Sorts all stakeholder into one of four actionable engagement strategies: Use commotion for promotion; limit attention; keep Involved; build urgency & gain buy-in:

The tactical foundation of the design ensures resistance is perceived as valuable, buy-in efforts are targeted on high-impact stakeholders first, and leverages commotion to generate broader awareness for strategic initiatives.

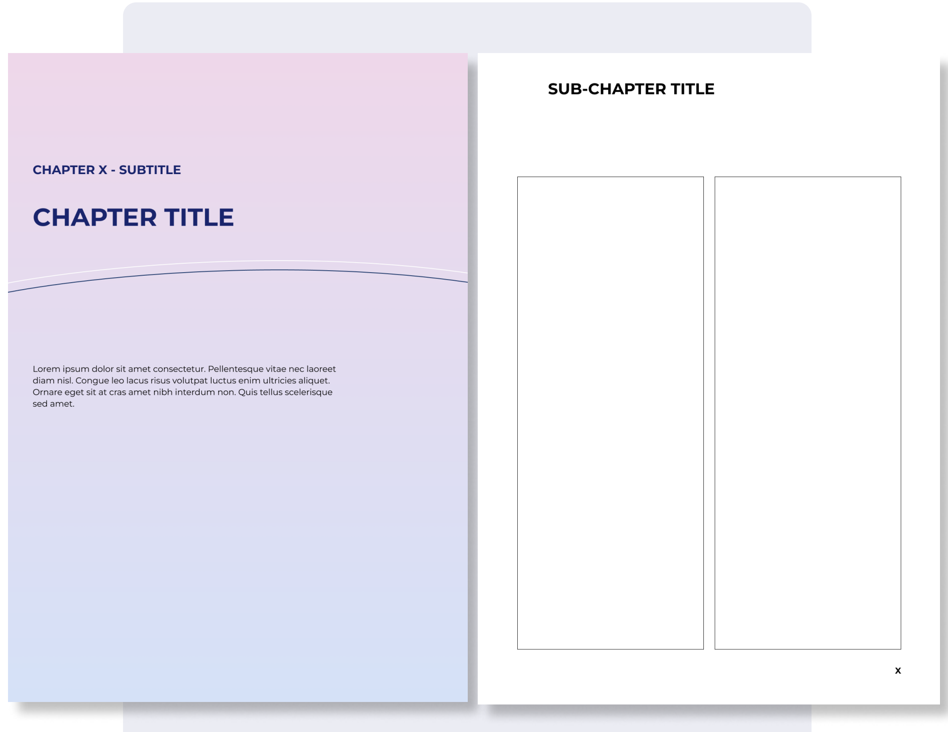
Usability testing showed that the decision flow is clear, structured, and easy to use. Participants quickly understood the yes/no structure. Scenario testing confirmed the tool's practicality, relevance, and ability to bring clarity to complex internal stakeholder environments.

This research contributes to the practice of organizational change by designing a repeatable, actionable way-of-working, empowers RSG employees to systematically aligning stakeholder urgency with tailored engagement strategies and thereby move marginal ideas into mainstream organizational priorities.

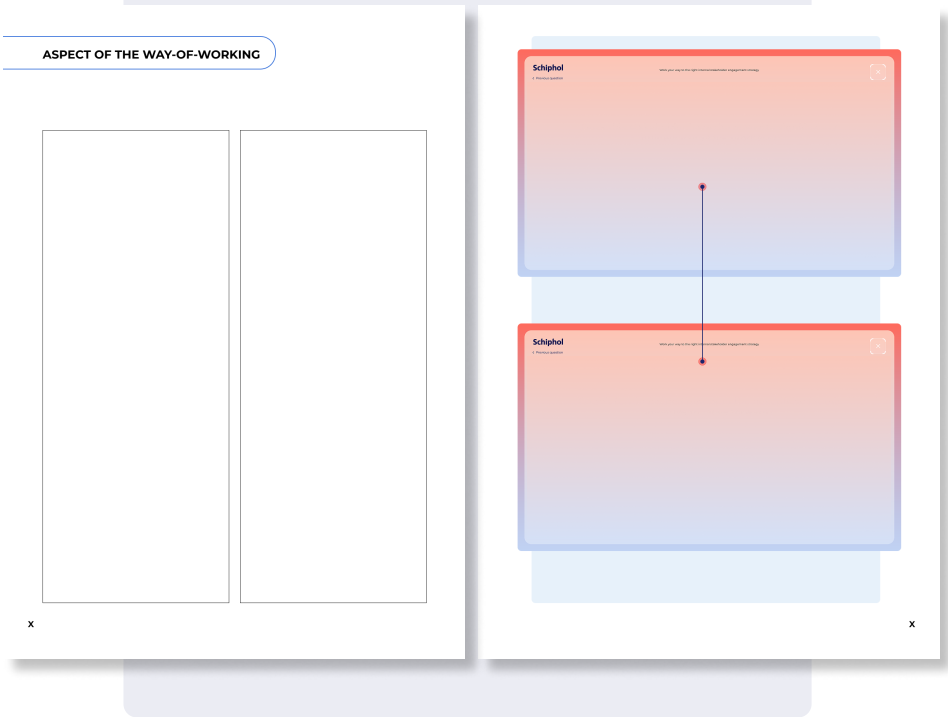
Keywords:
way-of-working, organizational dynamics, strategy myopia, urgency perceptions, decision flow, stakeholder engagement

READING GUIDE

The chapter title page outlines key topics covered in the chapter.



Connecting lines illustrate the relationships between two or more frames in the decision flow



GLOSSARY

RSG = Royal Schiphol Group
S&AP = Strategy & Airport Planning
AMP = Airport Master Planning
DG = Decision Gate
PoC = Proof of Concept

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the relevance of this graduation project. Strategy myopia is a common challenge among organizations, and employees within Royal Schiphol Group’s Strategy & Airport Planning department are no exception. The organization's ambition to transform into a multimodal transport hub is an example this issue. It demonstrates the difficulty of translating long-term strategic visions into organization-wide support.

Many organizations suffer from strategy myopia: an overemphasis on short-term operational concerns that overshadows long-term strategic vision. For example, Hrebiniak (2005) in Making Strategy Work highlights how organizations often struggle with executing long-term strategies because immediate operational issues dominate decision-making.

At Royal Schiphol Group (RSG), strategy myopia is experienced by employees from the Strategy & Airport Planning department. They lack a clear understanding of how their strategic plans and innovations spread throughout the organization, doubting if their plans are widely known and supported by the rest of the organization.

Illustrating strategy myopia

At RSG, the ambition to transform into a multimodal transport hub (MTH) illustrates an example of this challenge. Despite its strategic potential to enhance regional connectivity and optimize transport efficiency (Toet et al., 2024), the initiative remains underprioritized and struggles to gain traction, therefore remaining a marginal idea. This struggle is not unique to the MTH ambition; other long-term strategic initiatives at RSG similarly face challenges in securing broad organizational support and translating vision into action.

Strategic intent and operational activities

There is often a significant gap between high-level strategic intent and the daily operational activities required to execute that vision, resulting in initiatives that fail to materialize into concrete actions (MacLennan, 2010).
To avoid this this outcome leadership engagement and clear communication are crucial: without supportive leadership and alignment of resources, structures, and employee behavior, strategic initiatives risk being stalled or overlooked (Ndambiri, 2015).

The design of a way-of-working

This research addresses this challenge by examining the organizational dynamics within RSG that prevent long-term strategic initiatives from extending beyond the margins of the Strategy & Airport Planning department. Based on these insights, a way-of-working is designed to facilitate broader engagement with strategic initiatives across the entire Royal Schiphol Group. Ultimately, the design ensures these initiatives receive the necessary attention and alignment to move from conceptual idea to action.

CHAPTER 2 - THE GRADUATION PROJECT

ASSIGNMENT AND APPROACH

Chapter 2 outlines the collaboration, assignment and approach of the graduation project at Royal Schiphol Group. Key terms like margin and mainstream are defined, referring to the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. The chapter concludes by explaining how the Double Diamond Design approach structured the project.

2.1 COLLABORATION

Royal Schiphol Group
This graduation project is conducted at Royal Schiphol Group (RSG) in the Strategy & Airport Planning (S&AP) department. This department is responsible for shaping Schiphol's future. I worked across the Master Planning, and Innovation Hub teams, both part of S&AP. With **Jonathan** from Master Planning and **Yannick** from the Innovation Hub as my sounding boards and sparring partners.

Besides Jonathan and Yannick, I received input and help from the rest of the employees in these teams, as well as from people across other departments of RSG. They were are always kind and open, willing to share their insights and experiences. This helped me gain a deeper understanding of challenges at RSG.

TU Delft
This project was part of the Master Strategic Product Design at TU Delft and was supervised by **Sicco** and **Aniek**, both very familiar faces at Schiphol.

Aniek is a PhD candidate researching how airports develop into multimodal transport hubs, focusing on how different mobility systems are connected. Sicco brought his extensive knowledge in strategic design for the aviation sector. Specifically relevant for my project, Sicco brings a lot of experience in innovation and organizational change within airport environments. Together, with their expertise in mobility, design, and strategy they have helped me throughout the project and to connect academic research with practical challenges at Royal Schiphol Group.

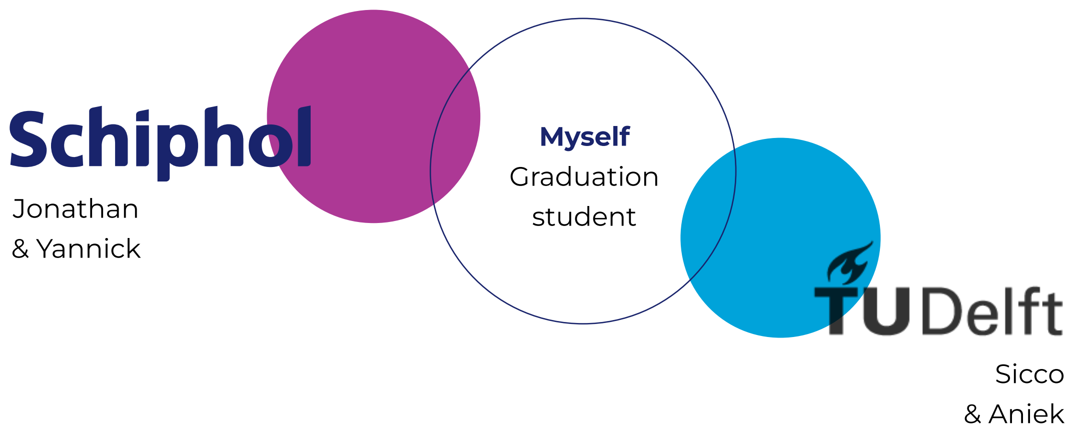


Figure 1: collaboration between Royal Schiphol Group, TU Delft and me

2.2 ASSIGNMENT

Rationale

RSG has expressed their intention to further develop Schiphol as a multimodal hub, stating in their 2022 annual report:

“We are committed to advancing multimodality and improving connectivity while simultaneously reducing our environmental and noise footprint.” (Royal Schiphol Group, 2023)

However, there appears to be a gap in organizational awareness and enthusiasm around this goal. For example, in RSG's 2023 annual report (Royal Schiphol Group, 2024 [A]), the term "multimodal" is mentioned only four times across 260 pages. In their 2024 annual report, multimodal was mentioned 6 times in 300 pages (Royal Schiphol Group, 2025), suggesting that the concept of multimodality is not yet a prominent focus throughout the company.

Challenge

This represents a broader challenge within RSG, where strategic initiatives struggle to transition from marginal ideas to mainstream priorities. Despite their potential value, these initiatives may lack the internal momentum, visibility, and commitment necessary for widespread adoption throughout the whole organisation.

Research Questions

To address the challenge of moving marginal ideas to mainstream-adopted projects at RSG, it is essential to explore the underlying organizational dynamics that contribute to this problem. By analyzing past projects, both those that successfully transitioned to mainstream and those that did not, I aimed to identify key factors that influence the adoption of strategic initiatives within the organization. The exploration resulted in the following research questions:

1. What organizational dynamics influence whether strategic initiatives at RSG move from margin to mainstream?

2. What factors contributed to past strategic initiatives successfully becoming mainstream at RSG?

3. What barriers have prevented past strategic initiatives from moving beyond the margin?

Assignment

Based on these insights, how can we design a way-of-working to help employees, specifically from the S&AP department, move strategic initiatives from marginal idea to mainstream priority throughout RSG?

The project brief can be found in appendix A.

2.3 SCOPE

To clarify what is meant by the terms *margin* and *mainstream* in this research, I refer to Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory. This theory describes how innovations follow a predictable adoption curve. Innovations typically begin with early adopters, a small group of individuals or teams willing to experiment with new ideas before broader organizational acceptance takes place.

Margin
Within RSG, an initiative in the margin refers to one that is still in this early adoption phase, where only a limited number of stakeholders recognize its potential (Rogers, 2003). The idea is initiated by the *innovators*, accounting for only a small group of people.

Mainstream
A strategic initiative is considered mainstream once it has been adopted and embedded within the organization. This means the initiative has moved beyond the support of a small group of advocates and now structurally integrated into RSG's daily operations. It is well known by the *majority* (Rogers, 2003).

By defining margin and mainstream, this research examines what factors influence the transition between these two states and why some initiatives successfully reach mainstream adoption while others remain at the margins. It is important to note that these two states are not binary: initiatives can exist on a spectrum, gradually moving from margin to mainstream rather than making an immediate leap.

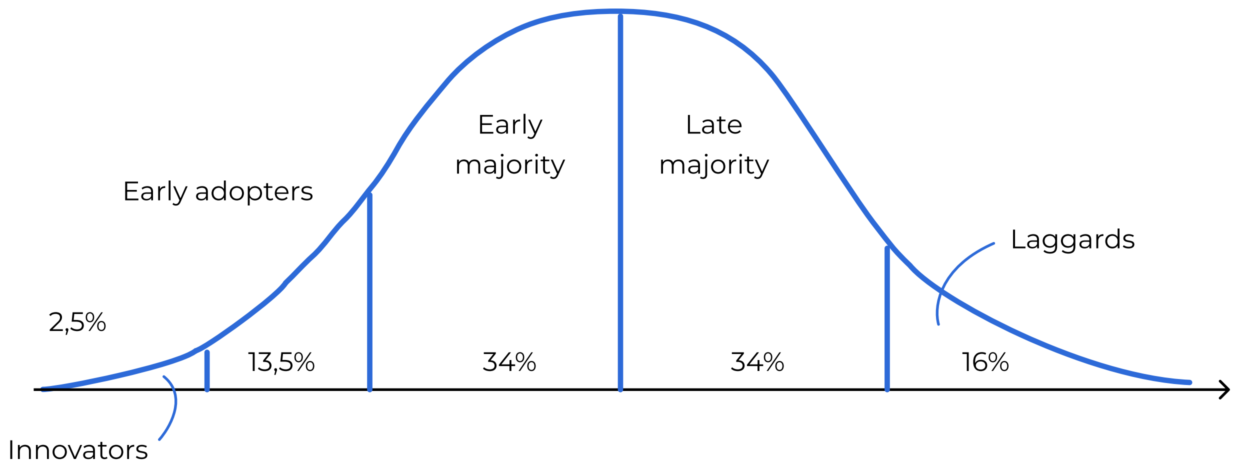


Figure 2: Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

2.4 APPROACH

Double Diamond

To guide and structure the project, the double diamond model is used, as developed by the Design Council (2004). The double diamond divides the project into four phases, where divergent and convergent thinking take turns (figure 3). The first diamond (the problem space) involves discovering and defining the problem. The second diamond (the solution space) focusses on developing and designing the solution. While this approach seems linear, in reality I constantly shifted between phases, making it an iterative design process (Elmansy, 2021).

Broad discovery rather than targeted exploration

Focussing on strategic innovations in general, instead of the narrow scope of multimodality provided a broader understanding of the organizational dynamics of RSG, which was essential for me, as a researcher new to the organization. However, I acknowledge the findings are quite generic and may lead to information overload. With the rationale, design focus and criteria in chapter 6, help narrow the design space again, after the broad discovery in the chapters before.

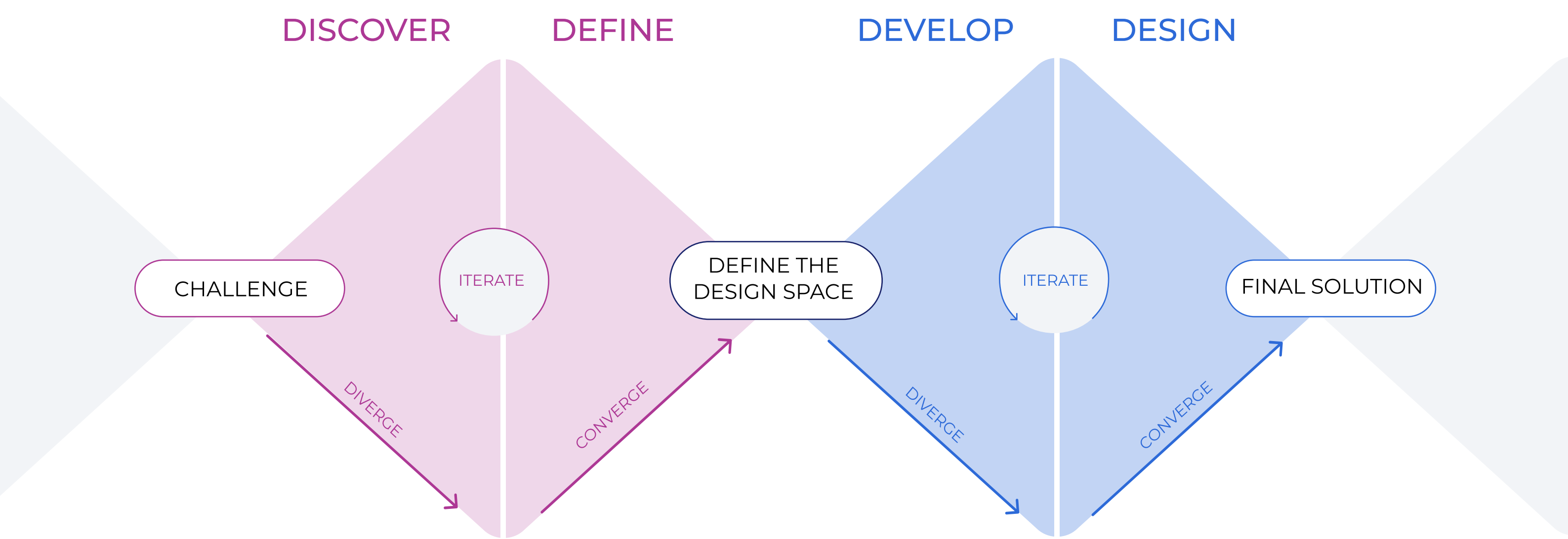


Figure 3: Double diamond design approach (Design Council, 2004)

Discover

In the discover phase, I focused on gaining a deep understanding of RSG's organizational dynamics. Through unstructured interviews with employees across several departments, I explored their perceptions of strategic innovation and the challenges they face in rolling out or adopting new initiatives. Additionally, I conducted generative design sessions, where participants collaboratively mapped past change initiatives. This helped to discover barriers and accelerators that influenced their success or failure. A thematic analysis of the collected data was performed to identify patterns. To complement these findings, I analyzed RSG's organizational structure, culture, and formal decision-making processes.

Define

Building on the insights from the discover phase, the define phase focused on summarizing these findings and defining what the insights mean for RSG. To make the organizational dynamics more tangible, I synthesized the interview data into workforce personas, portraying the difference in mindsets of operational, strategic, and innovation-focused employees. Finally, I formulated design criteria grounded in the identified challenges, setting the design space for the solution development.

Develop

The develop phase followed an iterative approach. I reviewed existing stakeholder mapping tools used within RSG's S&AP teams and evaluated their limitations. New data was gathered through expert interviews on change management, focus groups, and co-creation sessions with employees. I also conducted experiments, like the organizational structure sketching exercise, to further explore informal dynamics. These activities informed the development of an initial way-of-working, which was then continuously refined based on user feedback and practical testing.

Design

In the design phase, I finalized the solution to support RSG in moving strategic initiatives from margin to mainstream. The way-of-working consists of three interconnected components: the tactical foundation, the decision flow and two integrated tools. The design was validated by scenario testing and usability testing.

CHAPTER 3 - CONTEXT BACKGROUND

LAYING THE RUNWAY

This chapter outlines how Royal Schiphol Group is structured and how strategic initiatives flow within the organization. It examines formal processes to provide insight into how ideas move from margin to mainstream on paper and how this process is challenged by the organization's culture. The initial observations reveal how a focus on urgent, short-term issues can obstruct long-term strategic progress.

3.1 ROYAL SCHIPHOL GROUP

To understand how strategic initiatives currently evolve at RSG, we need to look at where the organization aims to go and how it is currently organized to achieve those goals.

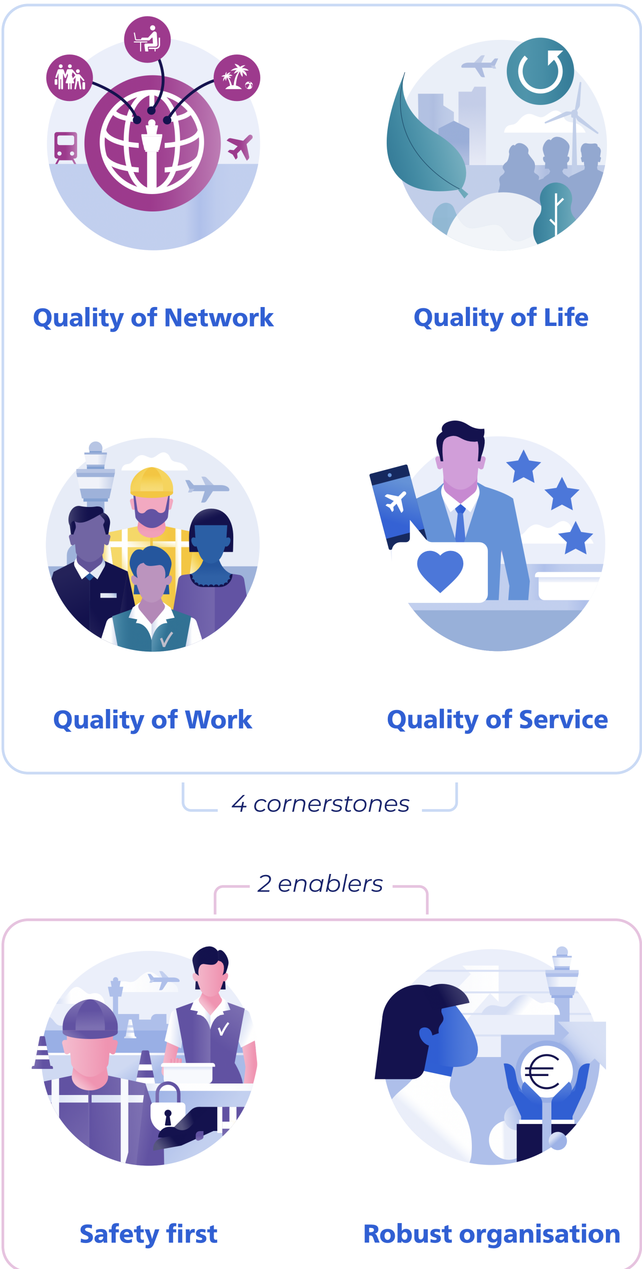


Figure 4: RSG's vision 2050.
Illustrations from 2023 annual report Schiphol

Royal Schiphol Group's vision for 2050
RSG envisions becoming the world's most sustainable and high-quality airport (Royal Schiphol Group, 2024 [A]). This vision is structured around *four cornerstones (figure 4)*:

Quality of Network: Maintaining strong international connections essential for an open and globally connected economy like the Netherlands

Quality of Life: Acknowledging responsibility for a sustainable future in aviation, focusing on the well-being of people and the environment.

Quality of Work: Enhancing the quality of work for both Schiphol Group's workforce and the entire value chain.

Quality of Service: Providing passengers and customers with unparalleled service quality.

These qualities are supported by *two foundational enablers*:

Safety First: Prioritizing safety across all operations.

Robust Organization: Building a strong financial base, upholding high ethical standards, and maintaining a solid organizational framework.

Schiphol has a clear vision for 2050, but the challenge lies in translating this long-term ambition into everyday practice. How the organization is structured and how decisions are made is key to understand how their ambitions are realized in their daily operations.

Organizational structure

Schiphol's organizational structure is primarily represented through a hierarchical organogram, outlining the reporting lines and departmental divisions under each directors responsibility. Employees consistently referred to this formal structure when asked about how the organization is structured, indicating that the organogram is the main point of reference for understanding roles and responsibilities.

To illustrate Schiphol's organizational setup, figure 5 presents a simplified version of the organogram. It shows how different departments fall under specific directors. This provides a structured top-down perspective but does not capture the informal networks and interdepartmental collaboration that are crucial for strategy execution.

While the hierarchical organogram clearly defines who reports to whom, there is no widely recognized visual that represents how departments work together on cross-departmental projects or initiatives.

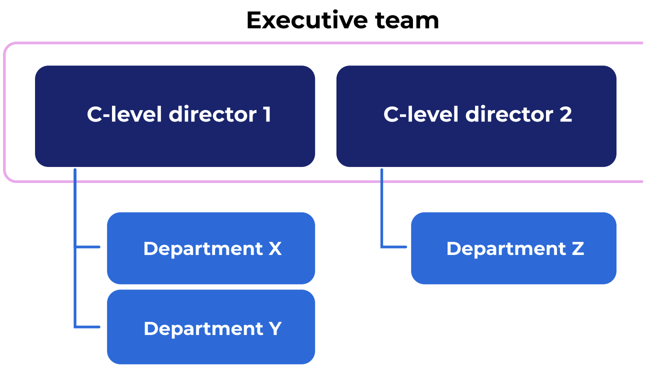


Figure 5: Simplified representation of a small part of RSG's organogram

Staff departments that support the business

I conducted a quick experiment with a small group of employees (N=6) to gain insight into how they perceive interdepartmental relations at RSG. This exercise served two purposes: (1) to help me better understand the organizational structure and (2) to assess whether the organogram, which employees frequently referred to, accurately reflects how Schiphol operates in practice.

While I will elaborate on the findings of this exercise later in the report, one key takeaway is that all employees distinguished between 'staff departments' and 'the business'. The business consists of departments: Operations, Infrastructure, and Commercial (figure 6)

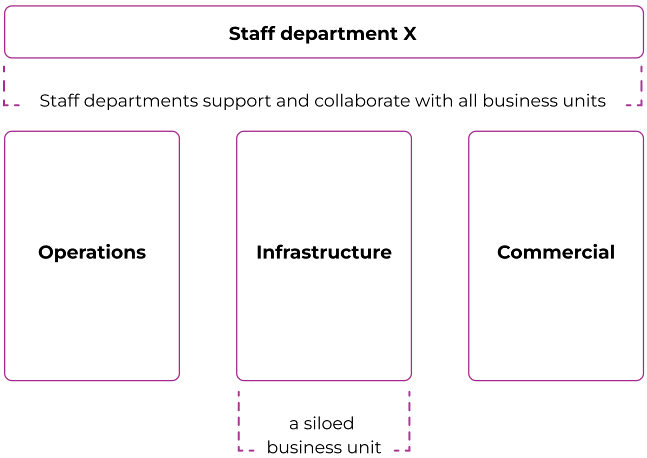


Figure 6: Staff departments and business units

This distinction suggests that while the organogram defines hierarchical structure, it does not necessarily capture the functional dynamics and relationships between departments.

The Capital Lifecycle: from margin to mainstream on paper.

To understand how an idea evolves from a concept into a fully implemented project we can look at the Capital Lifecycle (Royal Schiphol Group, 2024 [B]) (figure 7).

A project starts as an idea and must pass through four decision-making stages: the Decision Gates (DGs). The idea is gradually refined and validated. Only if it is approved at each stage, it can transition from margin to mainstream. Otherwise, the project comes to a halt.

DG1 = the development decision. At this stage, an initiative is identified as a potential solution to a problem or opportunity.

DG2 = the project brief. The project proposal is formally evaluated. If approved, the initiative transitions into a project.

DG3 = preliminary investment decision. The project enters the detailed design and preparation phase. This involves defining project requirements, financial estimates, and preparing for procurement or contractor selection.

DG4 = final investment decision. At this final stage, full project approval is granted and it moves into the execution phase.

Drawbacks of PRINCE2

Schiphol's standardized capital lifecycle is based on PRINCE2 (Projects in Controlled Environments, version 2). This is a widely used methodology developed by the UK's Office of Government Commerce (bron).

While PRINCE2 provides a structured approach to project management, it also comes with challenges (Pawar & Mahajan, 2017):

Heavy documentation: The extensive paperwork required at each DG can slow down the process and lead to inefficiencies, such as going through multiple approval layers.

Low flexibility: Its rigid framework limits flexibility, making it difficult to adapt to changes mid-project.

Limited focus on people: PRINCE2 has little emphasis on team dynamics and collaboration, which can affect engagement (Pawar & Mahajan, 2017).

Implication

To move an initiative from margin to mainstream, it is crucial to build early support from key stakeholders who influence decision-making. Without early involvement, an initiative risks stalling before DG2, making it difficult to secure resources and move toward the project stage.

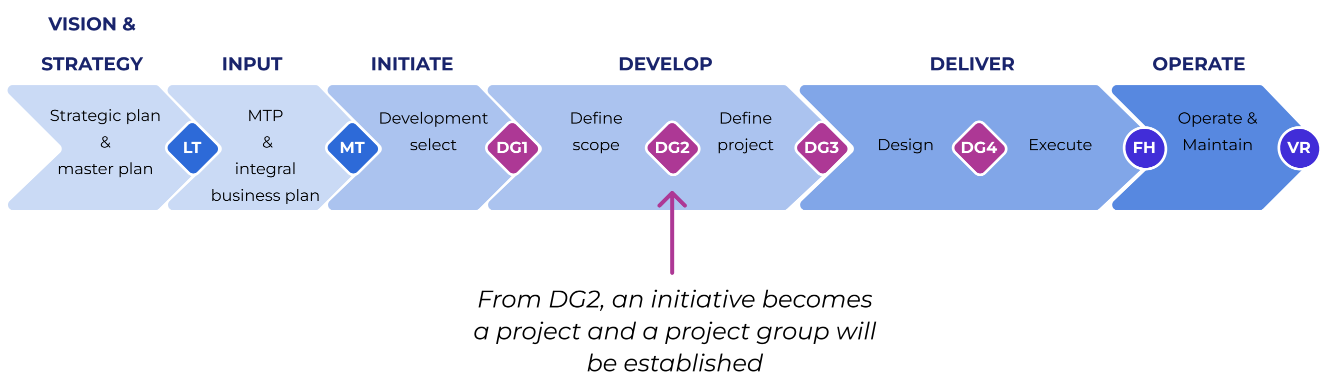


Figure 7: The capital lifecycle. Source: Royal Schiphol Group (2024) [B] Toerekeningssysteem 2025-2027.

3.2 THE COMPANY CULTURE

Damanpour and Schneider (2006) conducted a study on the adoption of innovation in organizations, analyzing 1,200 public sector organizations. Innovation in this paper was broadly defined; including new strategies and organizational changes.

Their goal was to understand what drives innovation adoption. They examined how different factors: environmental, organizational, and managerial, influence this process. One of their key findings was that organizational culture has a stronger influence on innovation adoption than external pressures (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006)

Therefore, we should examine the company culture of RSG. Which cultural strengths can we leverage? What internal challenges might prevent successfully moving strategic initiatives from margin to mainstream?

RSG's Culture: My Schiphol Survey '24

The My Schiphol Survey is conducted twice a year to assess employee satisfaction and gather insights into the workplace experience. It covers key themes such as leadership, autonomy, work pressure, opportunities for growth, and feeling appreciated. The results help RSG understand how employees feel about their roles and the organization, providing valuable input for improving the work environment. The outcomes from the most recent survey were used, from november 2024.

Insights

RSG is powered by 3032 own employees RSG in FTE in 2024, working hard to keep everything running (Royal Schiphol Group, 2025) (1 FTE is a full-time working employee). Many of them feel proud of the work they do and strongly believe they are helping Schiphol reach its goals. However, the survey also indicates there are challenges in the organization.

A detailed overview of the findings is included in appendix B1 (confidential)

Take-aways

RSG's culture shows strengths in employee pride, a strong sense of contribution to organizational goals and effective intra-department collaboration. Challenges can be found in appendix B2 (confidential).

3.3 INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

During the first weeks of my graduation project, I observed recurring challenges in my conversations with employees from the two departments of S&AP:

The Innovation Hub is responsible for executing Proof of Concepts (PoCs), which take place in the same operational areas of the airport as daily activities, requiring close collaboration with operations teams. However, they often face pushback and resistance, leading to friction in their collaboration.

The Master Planning team is tasked with developing long-term plans but struggles to assess whether and to what extent these strategies are embraced by the rest of the organization. They frequently question: *"How does what we do land in the rest of the organization?"*

Another recurring issue that stood out, was the lack of coherence in problem solving within the terminal. As one person put it: “*Years of short-term quick fixes have created a patchwork of temporary solutions rather than integrated improvements*.” Also, maintenance has been deprioritized the last years. This resulted in "*sweating assets*", where aging infrastructure and delayed upkeep have become a pressing challenge.

Identifying a pattern

It seems that urgent matters consistently overrule strategic change. This made me wonder whether the organization's focus on immediate concerns is preventing long-term plans from gaining commitment.

Introducing the urgency trap

The Eisenhower Prioritization Matrix is a time management tool designed to help individuals and organizations prioritize tasks based on two key dimensions: importance and urgency (Bratterud et al., 2020). It was named after U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was known for his exceptional ability to prioritize. The matrix (figure 8) visually organizes tasks into four quadrants:

	Urgent	**Not urgent**
Important	DO *Do it right away*	DECIDE *Schedule a time to do it later*
Not important	DELEGATE Who is the best person for the task?	DELETE Remove unnecessary tasks

Figure 8: Eisenhower priority matrix

By categorizing tasks using this framework, individuals can prioritize effectively and avoid spending too much time on activities that do not align with their overarching goals.

The core insight of the Eisenhower Matrix is that many people fall into *the urgency trap,* where they spend too much time reacting to urgent but unimportant tasks at the expense of working on tasks that truly matter in the long run (Bratterud et al., 2020). This occurs because urgent tasks often come with external pressure, such as emails that require a quick response, last-minute meeting requests, or minor crises that feel pressing but do not significantly contribute to meaningful progress.

The urgency trap leads to three key problems:

1. Neglect of long-term goals: since urgent tasks dominate attention, time for strategic activities is often pushed aside (Bratterud et al., 2020).

2. Constant firefighting: people caught in the urgency trap operate in a reactive mode, constantly addressing short-term issues rather than proactively shaping their future.

3. Burnout and inefficiency : the overwhelming focus on urgent tasks can lead to stress and exhaustion, leaving little room for thoughtful, high-value work.

How the urgency trap threatens the vision

Observations of (1) pushback against innovation, (2) difficulty in getting long-term plans understood and adopted across the organization, and (3) a lack of coordinated long-term planning in the terminal suggest that longer-term strategic initiatives are not a priority for much of the organization. If RSG continues to focus on short-term issues, as seen in our initial findings, integrating their 2050 vision into daily operations will likely be difficult. This might result in the organization being reactive rather than driving long-term progress.

In terms of the Eisenhower Matrix, this means the organization will remain stuck in quadrant 1 (urgent and important tasks), where they constantly react to immediate pressures. However, success in realizing their vision depends on also shifting focus to quadrant 2 (important but not urgent tasks), as this is where long-term strategic progress is made (figure 9).

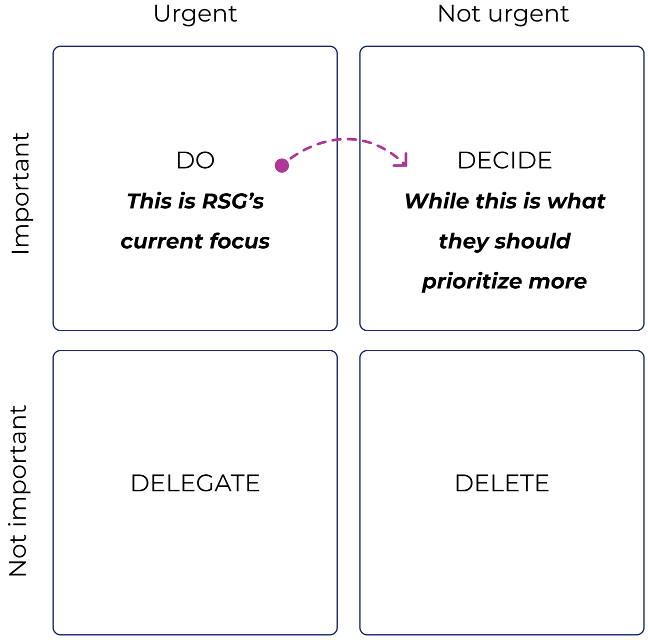


Figure 9: Focus of most employees of RSG should go from DO to DECIDE in order to prioritize strategic initiatives

3.4 HOW DOES THIS LEAD TO RESEARCH

Formal structures and decision-making policies only tell part of the story. While they provide an understanding of the organization on paper, they do not capture the informal dynamics that determine how initiatives move from ideas to implementation.

Employees hold valuable experiential knowledge about what works in practice and what does not. Qualitative research enables me to uncover these perspectives, offering a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the organizational reality.

By gaining a more comprehensive view of the organization, I can develop a well-informed solution that aligns with both the organization's structure and the needs of its employees. This ensures that the design is practical and relevant for the employees of Royal Schiphol Group.

CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The research methods are elaborated on in Chapter 4. The unstructured interviews served to gather diverse perspectives on strategic innovation from the employees of RSG. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by the theory of Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Change investigations were conducted using a generative design research method (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Timelines were co-created with employees to identify barriers and accelerators in past change initiatives, in order to learn from how they did or did not go mainstream.

4.1 UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Objective

Conducting unstructured interviews (figure 10) with employees across various departments was done to uncover their perceptions of how strategic innovation is done within the organization. The research aimed to explore how employees with different work focuses: whether strategic, operational, or innovative, view the challenges and barriers to strategic innovation in their specific working context.

By gathering these diverse perspectives, the qualitative study aimed to uncover underlying issues that may hinder the adoption of strategic innovation and should be taken into account in the development of a way-of-working.

The means: unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews were ideal for this study due to their flexibility and participant-focused approach. The conversational nature created a space of trust and openness, encouraging participants to share their thoughts and struggles freely. Without a predefined scope, this method allowed me to explore unexpected themes and insights critical to understanding perceptions of strategic innovation at RSG. The flexibility of not having a predefined script allowed to follow participants' narratives rather than a set of pre-determined questions. Therefore, the interviews captured authentic perspectives. This flexibility was essential for uncovering the challenges and barriers participants face daily during their work and provided richer and more nuanced insights (Minichiello et al., 1990).

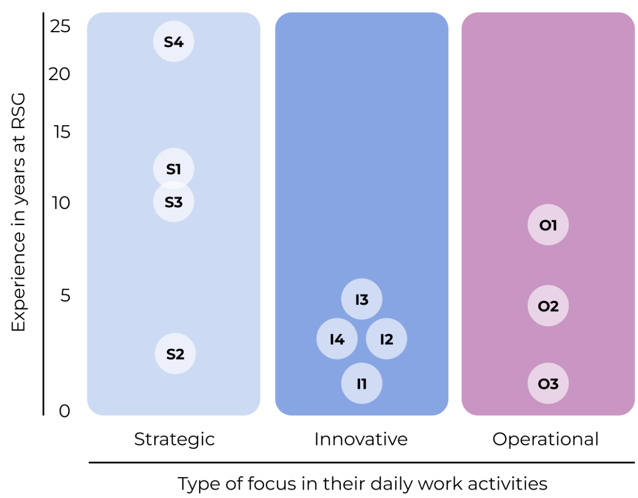
Recognizing organizational dynamics

By looking at the bigger picture, I was able to identify key patterns in the organization, like cultural challenges and communication issues, that affect how new strategies are adopted at RSG. These patterns appear across different projects and help provide a clear understanding of how the organization works.

Diverse perspectives of RSG employees

The study involved 11 participants from various departments within RSG, including strategic, innovation, and operational roles. This group (table 1) ensured a diverse perspective on how strategic innovation is perceived across different roles and levels of experience. Participants varied in their years of professional experience, providing insights from both long-established employees and those newer to the organization.

Table 1: Participant distribution by experience and focus in their work activities



Content of the interviews

The interviews began with an introduction to the objective of this graduation project: exploring how to move strategic innovation from the margins to the mainstream within RSG. Then, each participant was asked about their role and responsibilities to provide context for their responses and link their insights to their specific work environment. By inviting participants to introduce themselves and their responsibilities after the explanation of the research focus, they were naturally inclined to share their perspectives and experiences with strategic innovation at RSG.

For instance, the conversations naturally flowed to talking about their experiences in collaborating with other departments, their challenges in securing buy-in for innovations (*"Innovations that fix a problem get adopted quickly, but those that seem too far from current practice are ignored" - I3)*, and the tension between strategy and operations (*"Operations focuses on keeping things running today, while strategy looks ten years ahead" - O2*).

Gathering the data

Data collection involved digital note-taking during the interviews. In qualitative research, rather than striving for a "bias-free" study, it is crucial to acknowledge and reflect on biases to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy (Galdas, 2017). To minimize researcher bias, the initial notes taken during each interview were immediately revised and expanded while the conversation was still fresh in memory. This process reduced reliance on memory, which can distort or omit important details, and helped ensure a more accurate representation of participants' narratives.

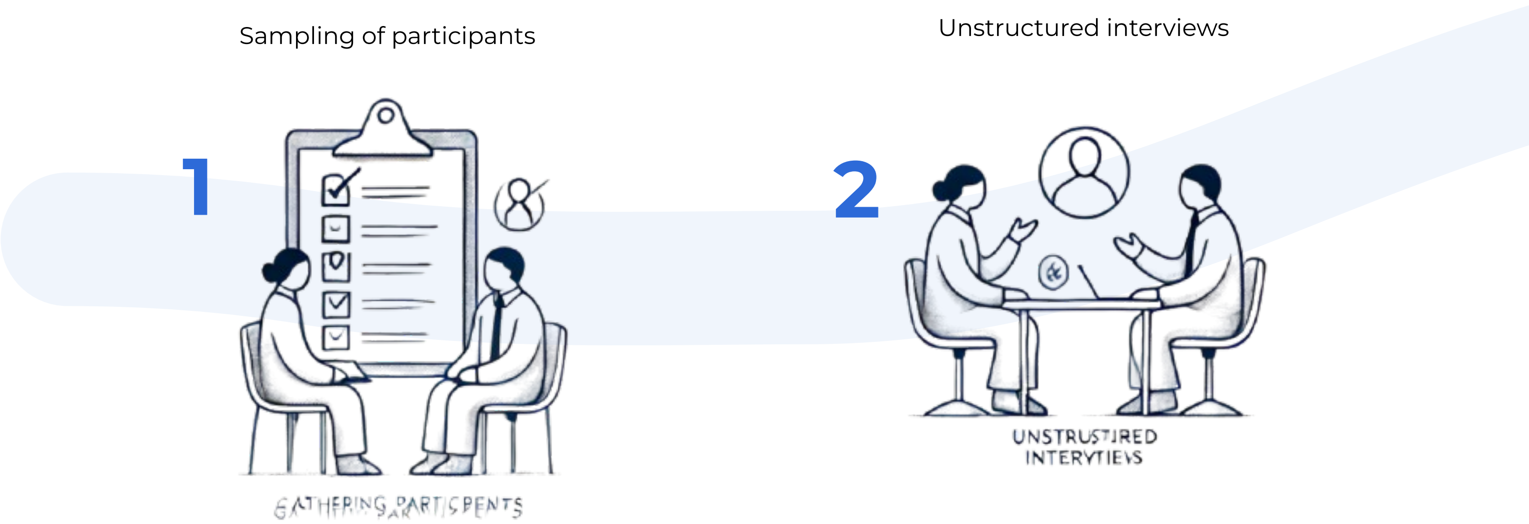


Figure 10: The unstructured interview approach, illustrations generated by ChatGPT

4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by the theory of Graneheim & Lundman (2004), which provided guidance in the systematic identification of patterns and themes within the obtained qualitative data. The analysis followed three stages: data condensation, clustering and connection-making, and theme formation.

Statement cards as data

The starting point involved compiling statement cards (Sanders & Stappers, 2012), translating raw data into condensed meaning units. These cards (figure 11) represented specific opinions and served as the foundation for further analysis.

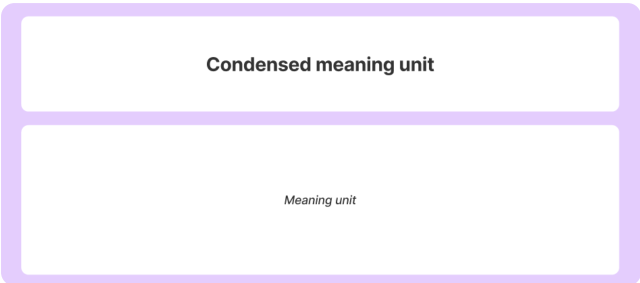


Figure 11: Example of a statement card

Clustering and connecting

Statement cards were grouped into categories based on shared themes. I then explored connections between categories, identifying contradictions and causal links. This process resulted in a large, interconnected framework, illustrating the relationships and dynamics within the data. From these relationships, sub-theme's emerged.

Forming sub-themes and themes

Finally, the sub-themes were synthesized into broader themes, representing the interpretation of the underlying meaning across the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). These themes articulated key challenges, nuances and contradictions according to RSG employees. The themes not only summarized the data but also provided a foundation for understanding systemic issues and potential solutions.

Chapter 5.1 summarizes each theme and draws key implications to inform the next phases of the project.

Revise data

3

Data analysis to find themes

4

4.3 CHANGE INVESTIGATIONS

Objective

The objective of this chapter is to analyze how past change initiatives at RSG transitioned from early marginal stages to mainstream adoption. By examining these initiatives, this chapter aims to uncover the key factors that accelerated or hindered their success.

Through this analysis, we seek to answer critical questions: (1) Which barriers made the adoption challenging? (2) Which accelerators facilitated the adoption?

My Generative Design Application: Co-Creating Change Timelines

Generative design research focuses on co-creation and the use of tools to surface implicit knowledge (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). I employed a generative design research approach by actively engaging employees in co-creating timelines of past change initiatives (figure 12). The timelines served as a visual and interactive tool, enabling participants to articulate implicit knowledge about barriers and accelerators. Through this participatory process, I facilitated shared meaning-making, allowing to together identify the barriers and accelerators for change within RSG.

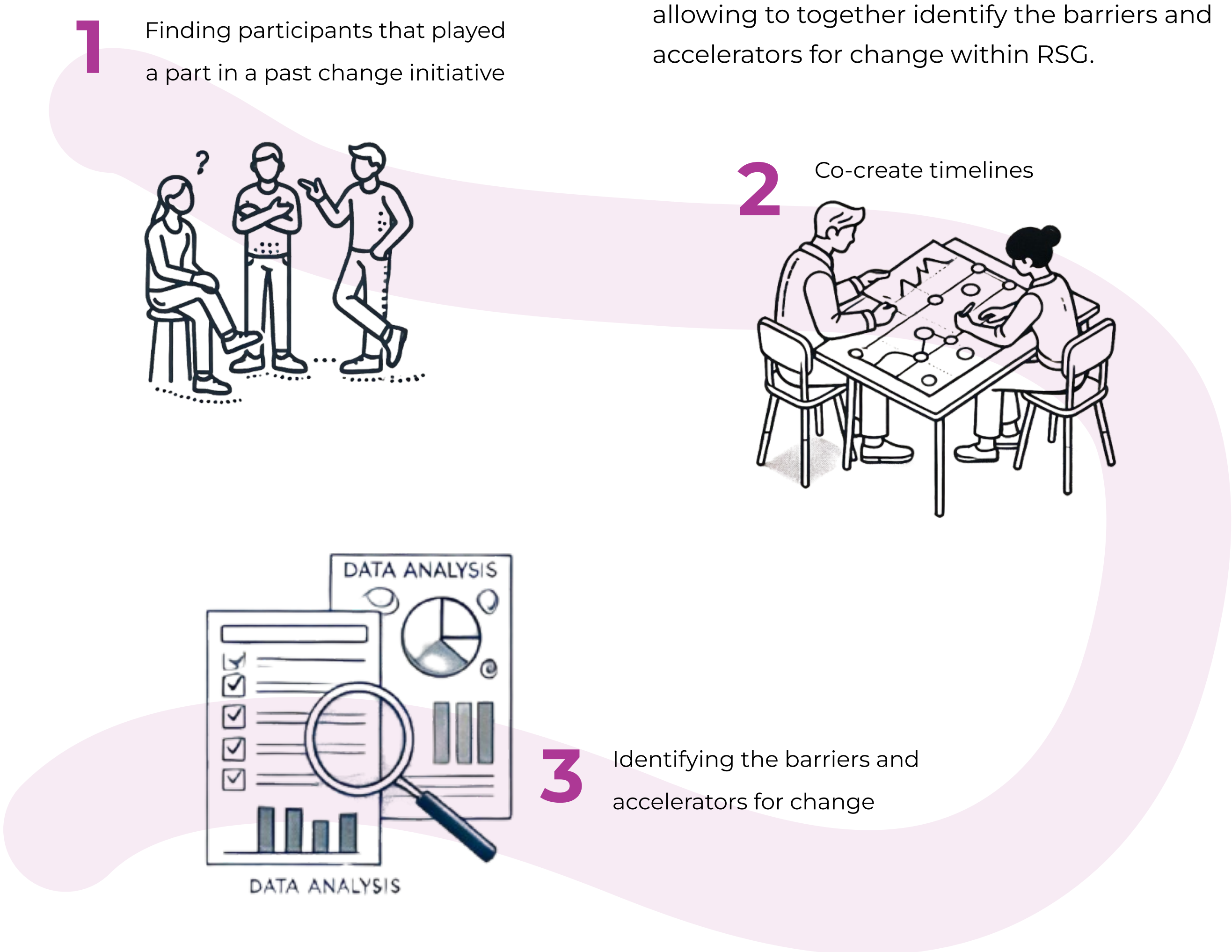


Figure 12: The generative design approach, illustrations generated by ChatGPT

Selected cases and their relevance

To explore the barriers and accelerators, three cases were selected based on recommendations that came up during informal conversations with RSG employees. These cases each represent unique challenges that provide insights into the reality of implementing change initiatives at RSG. Below is an overview of the selected cases and their relevance. Chapter 5.2 presents a summary of the findings. Here the identified barriers and accelerators in the change investigations are shared and implications for the next phases of this project are discussed.

Timeslots

This case involved the implementation of timeslots, allowing passengers to reserve a specific time for the security check, aiming to streamline the process and reduce waiting times. They were designed to streamline operations and improve efficiency. However, it faced significant challenges due to a lack of belief in the project during its early stages.
Key Challenge: Low initial buy-in. Employees and stakeholders expressed skepticism about the system's effectiveness, and the initiative only gained traction after a crisis highlighted its necessity.

Lifting aids

The adoption of robotic lifting aids aimed to improve ergonomics and reduce physical strain on employees (bagage handlers). However, this innovation required a significant shift in technology adoption among its users.
Key Challenge: Resistance to adopting new technology. Employees were required to change established habits and workflows, which created friction and slowed adoption.

Ultra-fine-particles (UFP)

This case involved addressing air quality issues caused by ultra-fine particles, requiring procedural changes to reduce exposure to platform workers. It presented complexity due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders with differing priorities.
Key Challenge: Procedural changes with diverse stakeholder involvement.
Adjusting operational procedures required alignment between various parties, including airlines, ground staff, and company X each with their own goals and constraints.

CHAPTER 5 - INSIGHTS

BREAKING DOWN THE INSIGHTS

Building on the qualitative methods outlined in the previous chapter, Chapter 5 delves into the analysis and interpretation of gathered data. This chapter first presents the themes derived from a thematic analysis of unstructured interviews. Then, barriers and accelerators identified through co-created timeline analysis are summarized. These insights combined are then used to construct workforce personas, revealing an imbalance between short-term and long-term thinkers. To validate these findings, their transferability to comparable organizations is examined.

5.1 THEMES

Three themes resulted from the thematic analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) Together, they highlight the main challenges and factors affecting strategic change at Schiphol, through the eyes of RSG's employees. They help explain what makes it hard or easy to turn new ideas and long-term plans into widely accepted and implemented solutions. Each theme is explained separately, supported by its sub themes and quotes.

Theme 1: The duality of urgency: necessary and unfavorable for strategic change

This theme captures the dual role urgency plays in initiating and implementing strategic changes. The data revealed that while urgency can act as a catalyst for change, it can also lead to rushed decisions and chaotic implementations.

- *Sub-theme*: Urgency as a catalyst for change: The data revealed that a lack of urgency deprioritizes initiatives. For example, one participant mentioned, "There needs to be an urgency, otherwise there is no conversation" (I3), highlighting how the pressure from long queues caused the push for timeslots. Crises such as the 2022-23 baggage crisis demonstrated how urgency mobilized stakeholders: "Suddenly, everyone was on board" (I2).

- *Sub-theme*: Unfavorable consequences of urgency: The data also revealed that rushed implementations due to too high urgency can lead to inefficiency and chaos. A participant remarked, "Because of quick fixes over the years, the terminal now has a lot of clutter" (O2). Similarly, the implementation of timeslots was necessary but resulted in implementing only a small part of a larger solutions due to tight deadlines: "We had one year to implement, and it was proofed to work in other airports" (I3).

What is the take-away from theme 1?

The key takeaway is that urgency has a dual effect in strategic change. While it can serve as an incentive to mobilize stakeholders and prioritize initiatives, it can also lead to rushed decisions and chaotic implementations, resulting in inefficiencies and incomplete solutions. Balancing the positive momentum created by urgency with thoughtful planning and execution is essential to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes.

Implication for the way-of-working

In my way-of-working, I should explore how to generate shared urgency across departments and stakeholders without waiting for a crisis to force alignment

In appendix C1, the formation of theme 1 can be found. It is structured from meaning units, condensed meaning units, categories, sub-themes, and ultimately the theme.

Theme 2: The discrepancy between long-term strategies and daily operations

This theme highlights the tension between long-term strategic goals and short-term operational priorities at Schiphol. Operational teams, focused on immediate tasks, often struggle to align and engage with broader, future-oriented objectives. This negatively impacts the success of strategic changes.

Sub-Theme: Operational priorities drive the acceptance or resistance to change.
Strategic changes are embraced when they directly solve operational issues. For instance: “Innovations that fix a problem get adopted quickly by operations teams” (I3). Timeslots succeeded because they benefited both passengers and operations:
“Operations saw the advantage of timeslots because passengers had a seamless experience, and operations could predict passenger numbers” (I3). However, changes perceived as disruptive or unsupported by data face resistance: “Remote baggage was dropped twice because there wasn’t sufficient data for buy-in from operations” (I3).

The second sub-theme can be found in appendix C2 due to confidentiality.

What is the take-away from theme 2?

The gap between strategy and operations stems from differing time horizons, fragmented priorities, and leadership shifts.

Implication for the way-of-working

In my way of working, I should aim to align strategic initiatives with operational realities, ensure they are shaped by insights from cross-department collaboration, and consistently align them with strategic goals.

In appendix C3, the formation of theme 2 can be found. It is structured from meaning units, condensed meaning units, categories, sub-themes, and ultimately the theme.

Theme 3: The importance of clear ownership and influence of key stakeholders

The lack of ownership and accountability is perceived as a significant barrier to driving strategic changes forward at RSG. This theme explores how unclear responsibilities and fragmented decision-making hinder progress.

Sub-theme: The absence of clear ownership and accountability: Many employees avoid taking explicit responsibility. One participant noted, “At Schiphol, people rarely say, ‘this is mine,’ but ownership is critical for initiatives” (I1). Another added, “A lot of time is spent figuring out who is responsible for what” (I4).

According to Hrebiniak (2005), unclear ownership can significantly hinder strategic initiatives. Solutions mentioned in the literature include clearly defining roles and responsibilities, simplifying decision-making processes, and establishing cross-functional teams.

Sub-theme: Change initiatives demand commitment from the right people. Employees struggle to create commitment, that is needed from key individuals: The success of strategic initiatives often depends on buy-in from influential stakeholders. For example, “Program development controls the budget, so getting their buy-in is crucial to scaling the project” (I4). Also, decision-making at Schiphol is described as overly complicated. This complexity hinders timely execution and creates inefficiencies.

What is the take-away from theme 3?
This theme highlights the need for clear accountability and targeted involvement of the right stakeholders to ensure strategic initiatives gain and maybe more important; sustain traction.

Implication for the way-of-working
With my way-of-working, I should aim to facilitate stakeholder buy-in by engaging key influencers to secure the necessary support and resources to sustain momentum for a strategic initiative.

In appendix C4, the formation of theme 3 can be found. It is structured from meaning units, condensed meaning units, categories, sub-themes, and ultimately the theme.

5.2 BARRIERS AND ACCELERATORS

In this section, three change initiatives at Schiphol were examined to understand the factors that influence their success and progress. The main insights are summarized below for each case, followed by an overarching conclusion.

Case 1: Timeslots (figure 13)

Context: Due to COVID-19 and the Prisma project (aimed at digitalization and decentralization), there was a need for faster and smarter ways of working.
Challenge: A lack of perceived urgency within decision-makers from operational departments and doubts about feasibility led to delays caused low buy-in.
Success Factors: The crisis situation (COVID-19) created added focus and urgency. External validation and downsizing the project scope contributed to increased stakeholder buy-in.

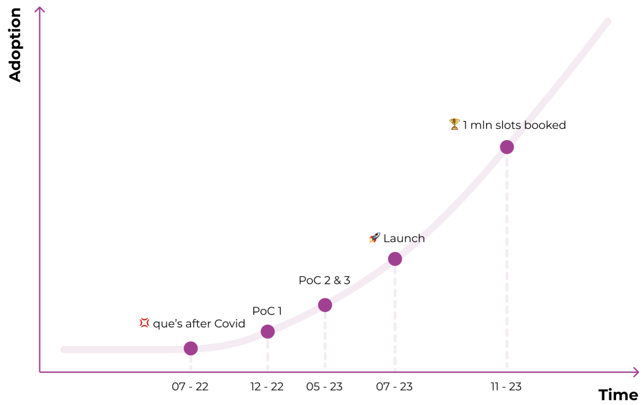


Figure 13: Digital representation of co-created timeline of Timeslots project

Case 2: Lifting aids (figure 14)

Context: With pressure from NLA, Schiphol tries to reduce the physical strain of baggage handlers with lifting aids.
Challenges: Limited end-user involvement and immature technology made implementation difficult. Existing infrastructure was incompatible with the new tools, resulting in persistent low adoption rates.
Success Factors: Clear urgency (inspection requirements and fines) and dual benefits (improving both employee well-being and operational efficiency) facilitated quick action and buy-in.

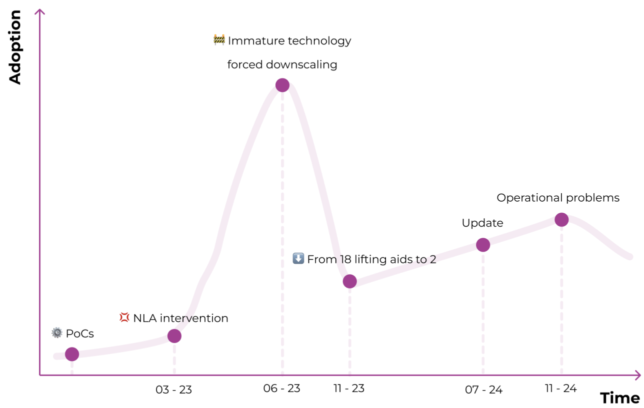


Figure 14: Digital representation of co-created timeline of Lifting aids project

Case 3: Ultra-Fine Particles (UFP) (figure 15)

Context: External staff complaints and environmental inspections pressured Schiphol to reduce ultrafine particle emissions.
Challenges: Complex collaboration among multiple departments and interests, long lead times, and limited prioritization due to ongoing operational pressures.
Success Factors: Innovative technological solutions and effective stakeholder collaboration eventually led to concrete actions and broader support.

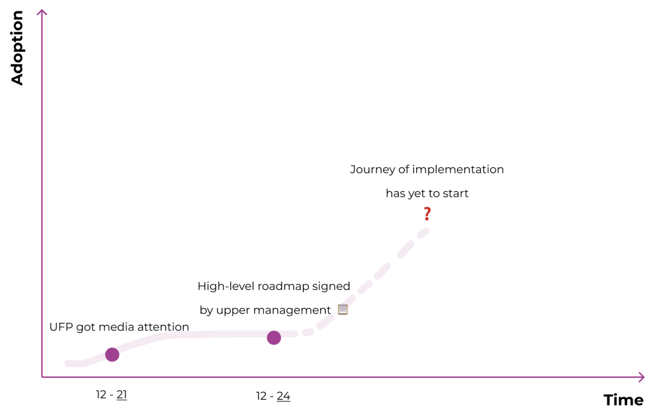


Figure 15: Digital representation of co-created timeline of UFP project

Barriers

- No perceived urgency: Operational departments may not immediately see the need for change.
- Lack of end-user involvement: Resistance and misunderstandings can arise if users are not engaged early.
- Immature technology: New solutions may not be ready for large-scale implementation.
- Infrastructure misalignment: Existing facilities or processes may not accommodate the proposed innovations.

Take-away: Barriers highlight when enforcement is necessary: if urgency is low or infrastructure doesn't support change, regulation might be needed to push adoption.

Accelerators

- Crisis or external pressure: Forces rapid decision-making and raises a sense of urgency.
- Dual benefits: Solutions that improve both operations and employee/passenger experience.
- External validation: Support from other airports or authorities builds trust and credibility.
- Collaboration and focus: Narrower project scope and clear division of tasks speed up decision-making.

Take-away: Accelerators show when adoption can happen naturally: if an innovation offers clear, immediate benefits, stakeholders are more likely to embrace it.

Regulatory push and innovation pull

The ease of adoption seems to depend on the nature of the initiative. When implementing solutions that don't immediately feel like an improvement (such as lifting aids or UFP measures) legal and regulatory frameworks can be powerful levers to enforce adoption. However, when an innovation is clearly superior to the status quo (such as suddenly happened with timeslots, due to crisis) the transformation of mindsets of stakeholders happens more naturally, with a snowball effect as stakeholders quickly recognize its benefits. The key could be to assess where an initiative falls on this spectrum and design the strategy accordingly.

5.3 WORKFORCE PERSONAS

The statement cards initially served as the basis for a thematic analysis to understand the organization. During the analysis, I discovered clusters that leaned more towards innovation, strategy, or operational-heavy focuses. This differentiation suggests that the employees' work focus shape their attitudes toward change and new initiatives. To capture and portray these differences, I developed personas. This method has been shown to enhance communication, usability, and design decision-making by making user needs more tangible (Long, 2009). These personas help explain the differences in attitudes between departments and will serve as a reference point in the develop/design phase.

The minority of long-term thinkers
While exact figures are unavailable, interview insights suggest that strategic and innovation roles account for a small minority, estimated at around 10%.

A look at department sizes supports this estimate: the majority of RSG employees work in operations-focused departments. For example, the Airport Operations & Aviation partnerships department consists of 1100 employees (Source: sharepoint). In contrast, the Strategy & Airport Planning department is relatively small, comprising only a few dozen employees each.

With strategic and innovation focused roles making up just 10% of the workforce, the vast majority (90%) of RSG employees work with a a short-term, execution-driven focus.

This highlights a key challenge: long-term planning and innovation must constantly compete for attention in an environment where immediate operational needs take priority.

Process owner

Operational focus

Motto

If it ain't broken, don't fix it. If it is broken, fix it fast.

"We point out problems all the time, but the decision-makers sit in offices far away from the reality of the workfloor."

Work-horizon

< 3 years

Challenges

- Overwhelmed by high-priority issues
- Automation challenges
- Innovation is top down, does not feel involved in future planning
- Strategy feels far from their own reality

Figure 16: Operational-focus persona based on synthesis interview insights. Illustration: Royal Schiphol Group

Strategy advisor

Strategic focus

Motto

Big visions need clear roadmaps.

"We create long-term plans, but the real challenge is making sure everyone knows where we're headed and how they contribute to it."

Work-horizon

5 - 10 years

Challenges

- Navigating stakeholder complexity in a highly political environment
- Scenario planning for uncertainty
- Monitoring interdependencies across projects and course correction

Figure 17: Strategic-focus persona based on synthesis interview insights Illustration: Royal Schiphol Group

"When a crisis hits, suddenly everyone is ready to act. The key is being prepared before that moment arrives."

Motto

Innovation isn't just about ideas: it's about timing, ownership, and getting the right people on board.

Innovator

Innovation focus

Challenges

- Competing for space & resources
- Spends a lot of time on stakeholder management to push projects forward
- Budget and political shifts largely impacts their work

Work-horizon

> 10 years

Figure 18: Innovation-focus persona based on synthesis interview insights. Illustration: Royal Schiphol Group

5.4 INSIGHTS VALIDATION

Given that this study was based on qualitative research, the findings where validated by exploring similar organizations, such as other airports and ports, to assess the applicability of the identified themes and dynamics. This also allowed me to evaluate the transferability of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and learn how other organizations navigate these challenges, gaining insights into strategies and approaches that could inspire the solution phase.

Seas to skies: understanding innovation in the broader context

The Seas to Skies Conference focused on the sustainable transition of EU ports and airports under the EU Green Deal (figure 19). The conference underscored the importance of ports and airports in the EU's green transition, offering a platform to discuss progress, challenges, and solutions for a sustainable future.

During the event, several themes emerged that highlight the challenges and opportunities that other ports and airports encounter during innovation, beyond the context of Schiphol Airport. Attending the conference allowed me to explore these themes and draw comparisons with the identified themes, internally within RSG.

In an expert roundtable (figure 20), innovation leads from various ports and airports discussed common drivers and barriers related to greening mobility and digitization within their organizations. By systematically comparing these expert insights with my observations at RSG, I assessed the extent to which similar challenges exist. The comparison can be found in appendix D.

Transferability

The insights from the expert roundtable confirm that other organizations face common themes and challenges, many of which are also present at RSG.

Figure 19: Seas to skies conference in the Skyhall of Brussels Airport on 3/12/2024

Figure 20: Expert roundtable - Common drivers and barriers for greener mobility and digitization

5.5 TLDR*: SUMMARY OF THE INSIGHTS

*TLDR stands for too long did not read. Below, the insights from chapter 5 are briefly summarized.

Three themes reveal organizational dynamics and provide takeaways for the design:

The duality of urgency: Find ways to generate shared urgency across departments proactively, preventing reliance on crises to force alignment.

The discrepancy between long-term strategies and daily operations: Ensure strategic initiatives are shaped by cross-department collaboration and align with operational realities for better adoption.

The importance of clear ownership and stakeholder influence: Facilitate stakeholder buy-in by engaging key decision-makers early to secure long-term support and resources.

The workforce personas highlight the imbalance between long-term and short-term work horizons.

Accelerators illustrate when adoption occurs naturally: innovations with clear, immediate benefits are more likely to gain stakeholder support.

Barriers underscore when enforcement is necessary: if urgency is low or infrastructure doesn't support change, regulation may be required to drive adoption.

Comparing the findings with insights from the experts roundtable during the Seas to Skies conference confirm that other organizations face common themes and challenges, many of which are also present at RSG.

CHAPTER 6

FROM RESEARCH TO DESIGN

This chapter provides a clear overview of the design space. It reconsiders the rationale for the project, clarifying the challenge that drives this research, particularly the varying perceptions of urgency for strategic initiatives across RSG departments. The design focus is then introduced, followed by the design requirements that will guide the development of the solution.

6.1 RATIONALE

Becoming a multimodal transport hub is part of RSG strategic agenda. However, the initiative is currently perceived as a marginal concept, struggling to gain traction and achieve organizational priority. Despite its potential to enhance regional connectivity and support Schiphol's broader connectivity goals, multimodal transport remains on the periphery of focus. This challenge is an example of a broader issue at RSG: while strategic innovations may have long-term benefits, they struggle to gain organization-wide adoption because they do not yet align with the immediate priorities of the key decision-makers.

Research from chapters 1–5 shows that while urgency is a critical driver for change, its perception varies widely across departments. Internal interviews, observations, and early investigations revealed that differing priorities and interests create a fragmented sense of urgency. As highlighted by Mitcheltree (2023), these differences in urgency perceptions can lead to differences in stakeholder engagement and hinder timely progress.

The opportunity, therefore, is to diagnose and address these differences in urgency perception.

6.2 DESIGN FOCUS

To move strategic initiatives from margin to mainstream, the design focus is to develop a structured way-of-working that ensures key stakeholders are identified, their urgency perceptions are surfaced, and actionable insights are generated.

Maps the Stakeholder Landscape:
For an initiative to gain mainstream traction, it must be supported by the right stakeholders at the right time. The mapping process will help users identify which stakeholders need to be engaged, ensuring that those with significant influence over the initiative's success are actively involved.

Stakeholder's felt urgency exposure:
A lack of urgency is a key reason why strategic initiatives remain in the margins. By exposing the urgency levels of key stakeholders, the design will allow users to understand which individuals or groups perceive the initiative as critical and which do not.

Uncovers Underlying Causes:
Goes beyond surface-level observations by investigating the root causes, whether they are knowledge gaps, misaligned goals or other issues that contribute to the lack of a shared sense of urgency.

6.3 DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

The design requirements serve as the foundation for the development and design phase, elaborately explained in chapter 7 and 8. According to Van Boeijen et al. (2014), design requirements define the essential characteristics of the design, ensuring that it meets the project objectives.

01

Identify & mapping internal stakeholders
The design should help identify all internal stakeholders involved in the change initiative. It should include a tool or method to map stakeholders who either impact or are impacted by the initiative. The design should classify stakeholders based on their role, their level of power or their influence on the initiative, creating a clear visualization of their position within the change process.

02

Stakeholders felt urgency assessment
The design should facilitate the assessment of a stakeholder's perceived urgency regarding the change initiative. The design should clarify whether they are prepared to invest time, effort, or resources to move the initiative forward.

Design requirement 1 is met if:

(A) All stakeholders are assigned a position that reflects the power they hold in relation to the initiative.

(B) Stakeholder positions are distinctive, highlighting variations in their influence and impact on the initiative.

Design requirement 2 is met if:

(A) All stakeholders are evaluated based on their perceived urgency regarding the initiative.

(B) Stakeholder urgency levels are clearly distinguished, highlighting variations in their engagement and priorities.

03

Actionable insights
The design should enable users to derive actionable insights from the proces of using the stakeholder mapping tool. This includes identifying key stakeholders who are most critical for driving the initiative forward and determining a strategy to address gaps in urgency.

04

Usability
The design should consist of easy to follow steps that require minimal training for usage. It should produce outputs that are visually engaging and easy to interpret, such as a comprehensive stakeholder overview that can be effectively summarized on a single slide. The design should be adaptable for use across various change initiatives, so that it serves as a practical tool for different teams and projects.

Design requirement 3 is met if:

(A) Users (employees of S&AP) can draw conclusions from the internal stakeholder overview.

(B) These conclusions enable them to decide on specific actions to navigate problematic stakeholders with the goal to drive the initiative forward.

Design requirement 4 is met if:

(A) The design is self-explanatory, functioning (filling in and interpreting) without additional clarification beyond the provided instructions.

(B) The design has proven to be applicable for the context of at least two different projects at RSG.

CHAPTER 7 — DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT

In chapter 7, a brief summary of the development phase is presented. First, the development method is discussed, where an adaptation is made a summary of suggestions for developing methodological frameworks from a scoping review. An overview of the evaluation and refinement activities can be found, followed by a simplified visual summarizing the evolution of the concept.

7.1 DEVELOPMENT METHOD

In my search for a structured approach to developing the way-of-working, I came across the scoping review by McMeekin et al. (2020). This paper provides valuable insights into commonly used methods and phases for framework development. While McMeekin et al. propose a structured three-phase approach for developing a *framework* (figure 21), this structured approach can also serve as a foundation for *developing a way-of-working*. Since McMeekin's approach follows a structured process of gathering evidence, developing a method, and refining it through evaluation, I based my own development approach on theirs to ensure that my way-of-working is well-founded and continuously improved (figure 22).

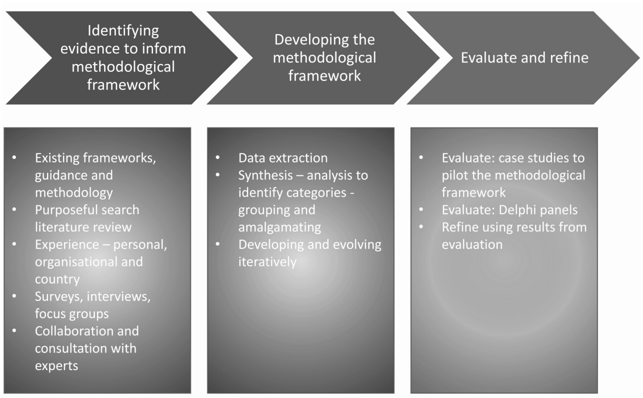
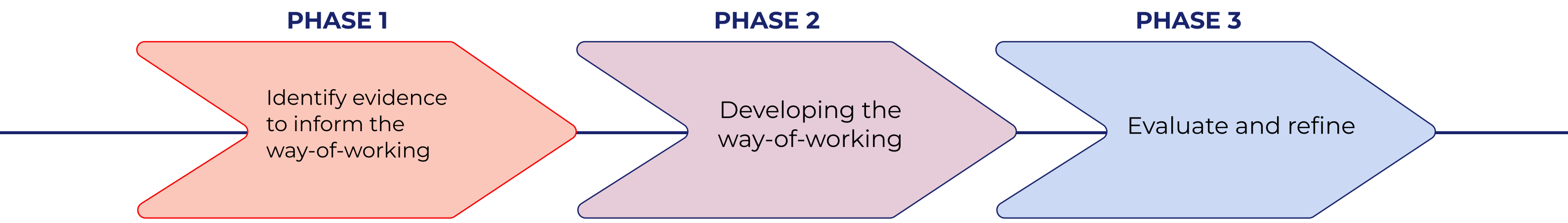


Figure 21: Summary of suggestions for developing methodological frameworks (McMeekin et al., 2020)



1A - Analyse existing data: the current tools and frameworks used by S&AP departments (appendix E)

1B - Gather new data:
- Design criteria (chapter 6)
- Findings from qualitative research (chapter 5)
- Focus groups: collaborative input from target group
- Expert information on change management

Amalgamating: Bringing together insights to develop the tactical foundation

Translating the criteria into initial steps of a way-of-working

Pilot testing (appendix F)
Scenario testing (chapter 9.3)
Usability testing (chapter 9.4)

Iterate based on employee feedback and assess usability

Figure 22: My adaption of McMeekin's approach for designing the way-of-working

While the development process was not linear, rather iterative, the main activities from the three phased approach as described in more detail.

Identifying evidence to inform the logic behind the way-of-working

This phase focused on gathering foundational information to structure the logic of the way-of-working.

First, existing data was reviewed by analyzing current tools used for stakeholder mapping and urgency assessment in the S&AP departments. The relevance of these tools was evaluated, leading to decisions about which elements to adapt or incorporate into the new way-of-working, with insights found in Appendix E.

Following this, new data was gathered to ensure the way-of-working was well-founded. This included design criteria based on the defined design focus, insights from qualitative research conducted at RSG, input from focus groups, and consultations with change management experts.

Developing the way-of-working

In this phase, the evidence gathered was synthesized to develop a tactical foundation for stakeholder engagement. The data from current tools, qualitative research, and expert consultations were amalgamated to create four engagement strategies for internal stakeholders. Additionally, the design criteria were refined into concrete steps that positioned users effectively in the process, realizing the logic of the way-of-working.

Evaluation and refining the way-of-working

After developing the initial logic, the way-of-working was tested and refined. A pilot test was conducted using a successful change case that had already reached mainstream adoption. The goal was to assess whether the steps in the way-of-working helped users evaluate stakeholder power and urgency, providing actionable insights. Feedback focused on improving the implementation of each step. Once the final design was established, scenario testing evaluated the real-world effectiveness of the way-of-working, ensuring it generated actionable insights for decision-making. The way-of-working was iterated continuously based on feedback from employees, mentors, and informal conversations, ensuring alignment with real-world needs. This feedback was collected during validation sessions, brainstorming meetings, and regular check-ins. An overview of these activities can be found in Chapter 7.2.

7.2 OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION AND REFINEMENT ACTIVITIES

This chapter provides an overview of the activities that took place during phases 2 and 3. The activities focused on testing, evaluating, validating, and refining the design based on feedback and input from the employees of the S&AP department.

Table 2 lists the activities, their respective dates, the number of participants involved, and references to appendices or chapters where further details can be found.

Table 2: The way-of-working was continuously evaluated by gathering feedback and input of S&AP department

Activity	***Date***	***Number of participants***	***Reference***
Validation of initial logic AMP team	07/01/2025	6	n/a
Pilot test	23/01/2025	1	Appendix F
Brainstorm session	27/01/2025	1	n/a
Co-creation stakeholder identification	30/01/2025	3	Appendix G
Organogram experiments 1,2 & 3	11/02/2025	3	Appendix H
Organogram experiments 4,5 & 6	12/02/2025	3	Appendix H
Feedback supervisory team	26/02/2025	4	n/a
Validation tactical foundation InnoHub	03/03/2025	9	Chapter 9.2
Scenario test case A	10/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.3
Scenario test case B	12/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.3
Usability test 1	12/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.4
Usability test 2	13/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.4
Usability test 3	13/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.4
Usability test 4	14/03/2025	1	Chapter 9.4

7.3 EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

This chapter provides insight into how the design evolved over time. It shows the key moments during the development and design phases that significantly helped shape the final design (figure 23).

Translating design criteria into steps.
The design criteria formed the foundation for developing the initial steps of the way-of-working. As input from the S&AP teams was gathered throughout the project, and as the strategy gradually took shape, these steps were refined. By following the steps of the way-of-working, the tactical foundation could be realized in practice.

Pilot test revealed the necessity of involving a resistor
To understand the design evolution, it's important to mention a key finding from the pilot test:

The test revealed a significant risk of subjectivity when employees followed the way-of-working individually, without involving the resistant internal stakeholders themselves.

This finding prompted an iteration to introduce multiple levels of collaboration. By directly involving resistant stakeholders, their attitudes could be surfaced, preventing the buy-in strategy from relying solely on the users assumptions.

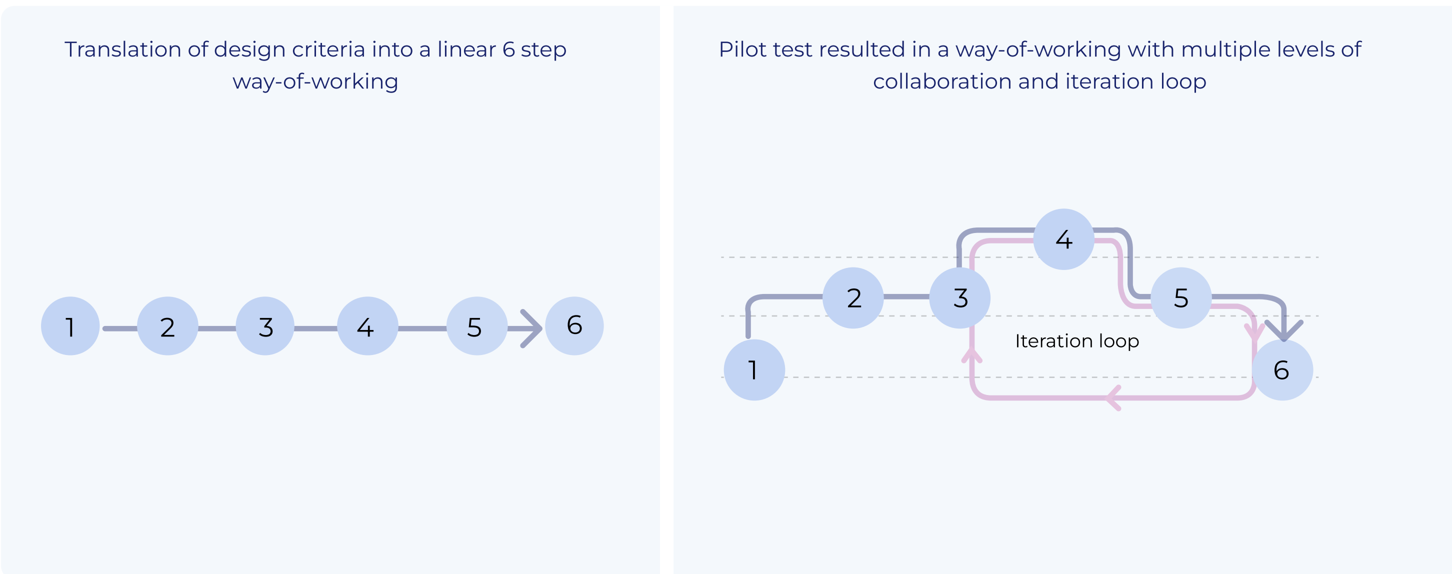


Figure 23: The design evolution can be simplified into four key steps

Red-teaming

Red Teaming is a structured method for challenging assumptions by role-playing the adversary (Longbine, 2008). Originally developed in military strategy, it is now widely used in cybersecurity, business, and organizational planning. I applied my own Red Teaming-inspired approach to stress-test the desirability of my design. By taking an adversarial perspective, I challenged the following assumption: “Employees will dedicate time to a six-step way of working, involving multiple collaborative sessions”

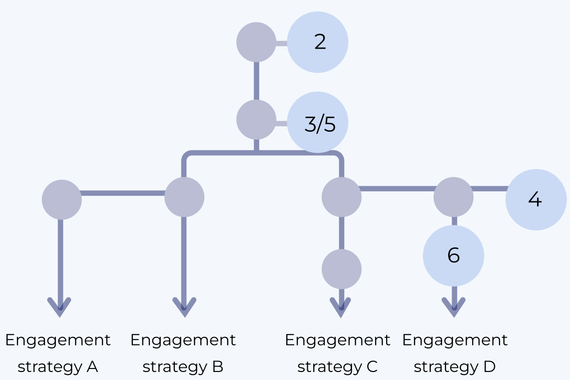
Being aware of the reality of their schedules, I determined this as an *unrealistic* expectation. Then I iterated towards a decision-flow model that subtly nudges users through the intended thinking pattern of the strategy, without requiring engagement in multiple steps.

Final feedback moment supervisory team

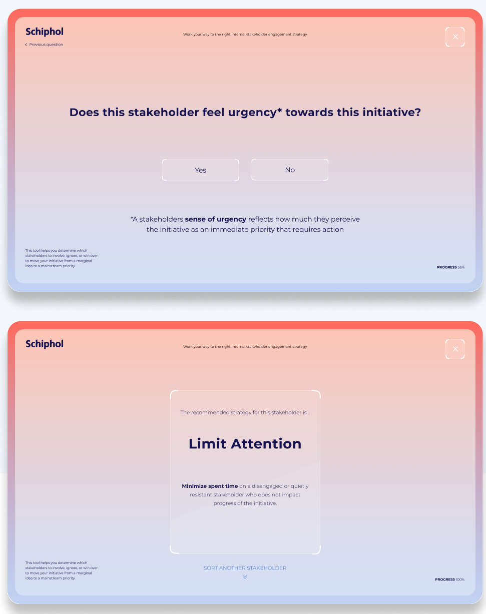
The final major evolution of the concept occurred following the "green light" meeting. During this session, extensive feedback was provided on the design, with the most valuable takeaway being that the approach could be simplified and made more actionable, as this was also stated in the design requirements. This led to the idea of creating a digital prototype for the decision flow, where users would be guided through engagement strategies based on their answers to simple yes-or-no questions about the stakeholder.

Chapter 8 presents the final design, with further details provided on its implementation.

Decision flow with integrated tools



Actionable decision flow, where simple yes/no questions direct used to one of the engagement strategies



CHAPTER 8 — THE DESIGN

PRESENTING THE DESIGN

This chapter presents the Way-of-Working: a structured approach that enables RSG employees to determine if, when, and how to engage the right internal stakeholders to move an initiative from margin to mainstream.

We begin by outlining the three interconnected components of the way-of-working to show how they fit together. Next, we introduce the core of the solution: the decision flow. We then dive into its tactical foundation and describe the four engagement strategies that emerge from it. Following that, we walk through the decision flow step-by-step, highlighting the critical decision points users will encounter. Finally, we conclude by illustrating the distinct stakeholder-engagement pathways generated by the tool.

8.1 COMPONENTS OF THE WAY-OF-WORKING

Components of the design in a pyramid
The pyramid below visually represents the relationship between the components of the design: the tactical foundation, the decision flow and the tools (figure 24).

At the peak sits the tactical foundation, the middle layer is the decision flow and the base consists of two tools.

While the vertical order of components is the most logical way to explain their interconnectedness, the most effective way to present the design is to first provide a high-level overview of the way of working, followed by the tactical foundation and how its tactical elements are translated into four engagement strategies as outcomes. Then, a detailed explanation of the key decision moments within the tool is given, concluding with a showcase of the possible user routes for each specific engagement strategy.

The tactical foundation
This is the overarching vision that guides all components below it. It will be elaborately explained in *chapter 8.3.*

The decision flow
The tactical foundation is made actionable through a structured decision flow, ensuring it is not just theoretical but systematically applied by RSG employees. A detailed explanation of the decision flow can be found in Chapter 8.5

Tools included in the decision flow
The tools operationalize the decision flow by providing support at two key moments. The tools are presented in *chapter 8.5* on page 61 and page 67 .

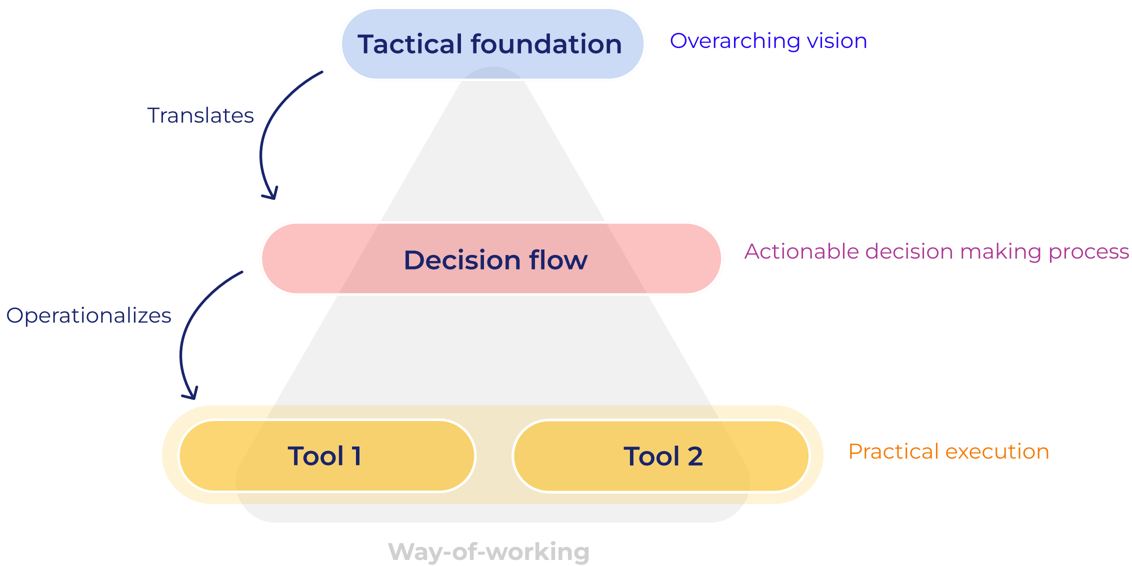


Figure 24: The pyramid of design components that together make the way-of-working

8.2 INTRODUCING THE DECISION FLOW

The decision flow tool was developed to ensure that each internal stakeholder is matched with the most appropriate engagement strategy (figure 25). By following a structured process, users determine whether Commotion for Promotion, Limit Attention, Keep Involved, or Build Urgency & Gain Buy-in is the best approach. The tool provides a consistent, repeatable framework for stakeholder engagement. The embedded tactical foundation guides users toward a more proactive and intentional approach to engage the internal stakeholders of their specific project.

How the tool works

The tool operates as a guided decision-making process. Users answer questions about each stakeholder's **power**, felt **urgency**, and **resistance**. Based on their responses, the tool directs them to one of the four engagement strategies. By systematically evaluating each stakeholder, the tool helps users prioritize efforts, address resistance effectively, and apply the right engagement approach to help them drive the initiative from margin to mainstream.

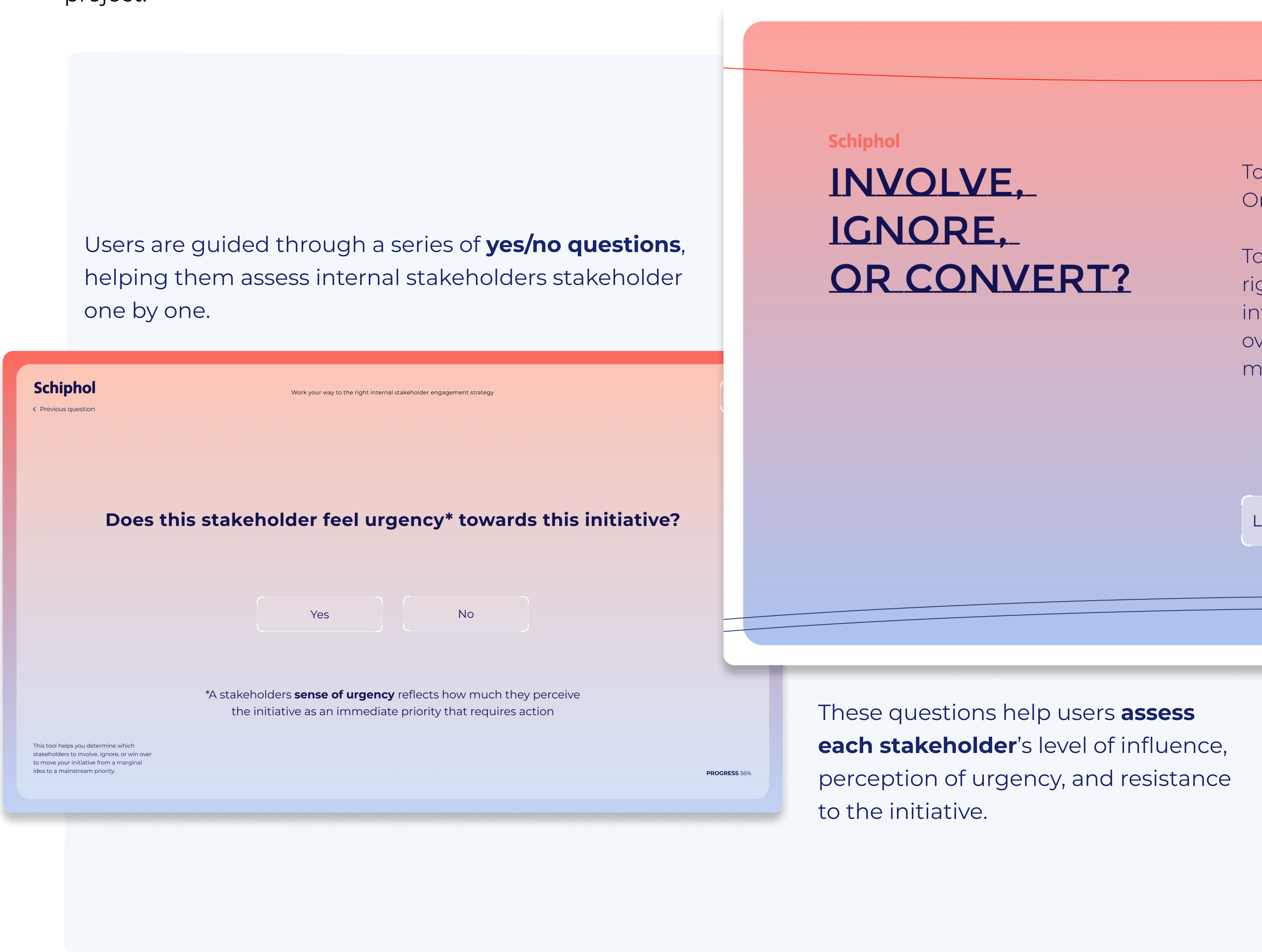
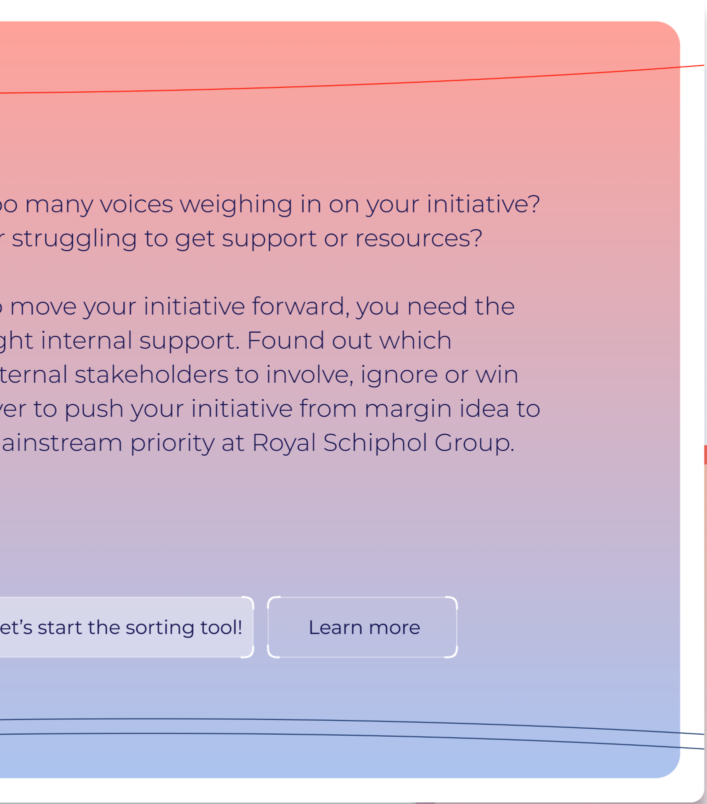
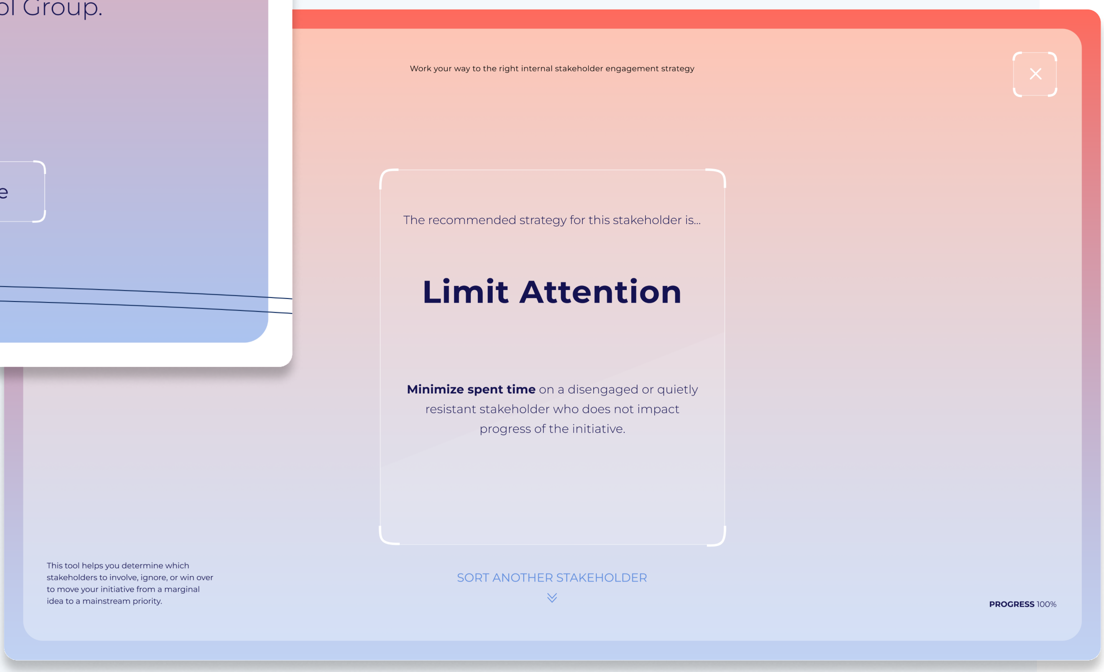


Figure 25: The decision flow - Involve, ignore or convert?



Based on their responses, the tool assigns the internal stakeholder to **one of four engagement strategies**.



8.3 THE TACTICAL FOUNDATION

A new strategic mindset

Strategic and innovation teams (S&AP) often struggle to engage operational teams, whose priorities are maintaining daily operations. When urgency is pushed from the top down, it can lead to resistance or disengagement. Instead of dismissing concerns or forcing alignment, we should leverage resistance as a strategic advantage.

Reframing resistance as engagement

Rather than viewing low urgency as a barrier, we should recognize it as a valuable perspective. Skepticism or resistance is not rejection, it is a reality check and an opportunity to refine and strengthen strategic initiatives. Operational teams' short-term priorities should be seen as valid, and their insights can improve long-term strategic initiatives.

The three tactical points for S&AP teams

The new strategic mindset of S&AP teams is summarized in three tactic points (figure 26).

Embrace resistance: treat it as an indicator of engagement. Acknowledge that short-term priorities are valid and necessary. Use their insights to refine and strengthen strategic initiatives.

Prioritize high-influence stakeholders first: Not every low-urgency stakeholder needs immediate advocacy. Focus first on those with the greatest influence over the strategic initiative.

Use commotion for promotion If people are engaging (even critically), they are involved. This is more valuable than passive disengagement. Commotion can be used to create visibility for strategic initiatives.

01

Value resistance

View skepticism and resistance as a tool to refine strategic initiatives rather than a roadblock

02

Selective efforts for stakeholder buy-in

Start with high-influence stakeholders before scaling advocacy efforts.

03

Use commotion for promotion

Active engagement, even if critical, creates visibility.

Figure 26: The three tactical points for S&AP teams.

How it might solve the problem

Operational teams often feel unheard and disconnected from strategic initiatives at RSG (chapter 5.3). This approach ensures their insights are valued, turning resistance into a tool for improvement rather than a roadblock.

Change research shows that too many stakeholders are often involved without real ownership (chapter 5.2). By focusing on high-influence stakeholders first, efforts become more targeted and effective.

A key challenge for S&AP teams is making their work visible and relevant (chapter 3.3). Leveraging debate as engagement creates awareness and ensures strategic efforts don't go unnoticed.

By addressing the needs of both operational personas and strategic/innovation personas, this approach helps bridge the gap between daily operations and long-term strategy.

Why this might work

It aligns with human behavior. People resist change when they feel ignored or forced into alignment. Avoid this by engaging with resistance instead of fighting it.

Optimize efforts where it matters . Prevents wasted time and resources on low-impact advocacy by targeting the most influential stakeholders first.

The new strategic mindset encourages long-term thinking. Engagement is not a one-time push. It recognizes that some stakeholders can (and should) be brought in later when the time is right.

8.4 FROM THREE TACTICAL POINTS TO FOUR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

To move strategic initiatives from margin to mainstream, it is necessary to engage the right stakeholders with the right approach.

Research from chapters 1–5 highlights that urgency is a critical driver for change, but the challenge is that urgency is perceived differently across RSG. Simply identifying internal stakeholders and their urgency perceptions is not actionable on its own.

This is where the three tactical points are transformed into four actionable engagement strategies for internal stakeholders.

By doing this, the theory (tactical points, figure 27A) turns into practical actions (engagement strategies) that the user of the tool can follow.

The engagement strategies are presented in figure 27B, labeled with the specific tactical point from which they were derived.

Value resistance

Selective efforts for stakeholder buy in

Commotion for promotion

Figure 27A: The three tactic points in labels

Value resistance

Commotion for promotion

Engagement strategy A:

Use Commotion for Promotion
This strategy is used when an initiative lacks visibility or momentum and faces **resistance from a low-influential stakeholder**. Instead of attempting to convert or reduce the opposition, the approach deliberately acknowledges and allows their resistance to continue.

The idea is that the visible pushback from these stakeholders can spark attention and generate broader awareness of the initiative. By allowing the opposition to be seen, the initiative gains exposure and increases its visibility, which can help attract broader support. This approach can be especially effective when an initiative needs a boost in traction within the organization.

Selective efforts for stakeholder buy in

Engagement strategy B:

Limit Attention
This strategy is used when an **influential stakeholder is not yet relevant** to the project phase or when a **low-influence stakeholder is not (vocally) resistant**. Instead of involving them prematurely (which could create unnecessary resistance or distractions), this engagement strategy minimizes their involvement. This helps maintain focus on the key stakeholders who are essential at this stage. The goal is to keep the process efficient and focused, avoiding resistance that could slow down progress.

Selective efforts for stakeholder buy in

Engagement strategy C:

Keep Involved
This strategy is used when **an influential stakeholder already supports the initiative** and feels urgency. To maintain momentum, it is essential to keep them engaged and committed, ensuring their continued involvement and preventing disengagement over time.

Value resistance

Selective efforts for stakeholder buy in

Engagement strategy D:

Build Urgency & Gain Buy-In
This strategy is used when **an influential stakeholder lacks urgency but is needed for the initiative's progress**, either now or in a later stage. The lack of urgency may stem from, among other things, skepticism, low awareness, or competing priorities.

This strategy values their concerns as valuable input. By engaging with them through a structured dialogue (chapter FIXME), stakeholders may more openly express their perspective. This allows the user to gain deeper insight into their point of view. This, in turn, enables a more informed approach to securing their buy-in.

Figure 27B: The four engagement strategies, labeled with the tactical points they address.

8.5 THE DECISION FLOW IN DETAIL

In the coming pages, we will take a deep dive into the decision flow, by explaining the most important decision points. This will be done more or less in the order a user would naturally follow.

By structuring it in this order, the explanation aligns with the tool's logic, making it easier to understand how each step builds upon the previous one.

To provide clarity on what to expect, table 3 presents the sequence of topics covered in chapter 8.5.

Table 3: Order of subjects in chapter 8.5

LEARN MORE

Before diving into the specific steps, this section provides an overview of how the tool functions, how outcomes are determined, and the possible engagement strategies users may be directed to (figure 28).

Users gain insight into how stakeholders are categorized into an engagement strategy and are encouraged to reassess regularly, as stakeholder involvement can shift over time.

The instructions clarify how users should work with the decision flow (figure 29).

They learn that the tool is part of an iterative process rather than a one-time assessment. While the decision flow can be used to evaluate a single internal stakeholder, it is designed to be applied continuously throughout the project.

The process begins with users **identifying** internal stakeholders, **sorting** them through the decision flow, and **noting** the outcome per stakeholder: the suggested engagement strategy.

After assessing multiple stakeholders, they are encouraged to **reflect** on the overall distribution across strategies.

As the project progresses and the context shifts, stakeholder engagement strategies may need to be adjusted. For example, during the implementation phase, securing buy-in from a stakeholder with decision-making power over execution may become critical. To account for these changes, users are instructed to regularly **reassess** stakeholder engagement strategies over time.

Note that the "Learn More" section does not initiate the decision flow yet, therefore it is kept consistent with the design style of the front page.

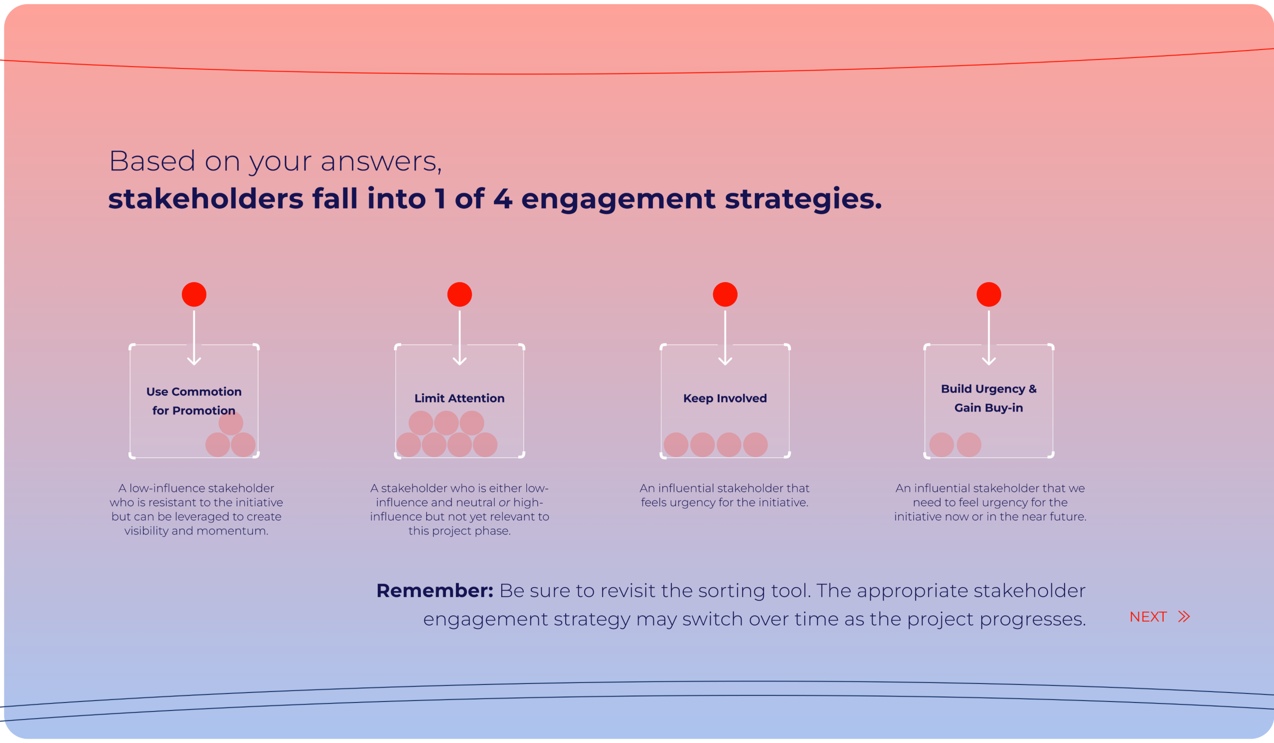


Figure 28: Explanation of the *outcome* of the decision-flow

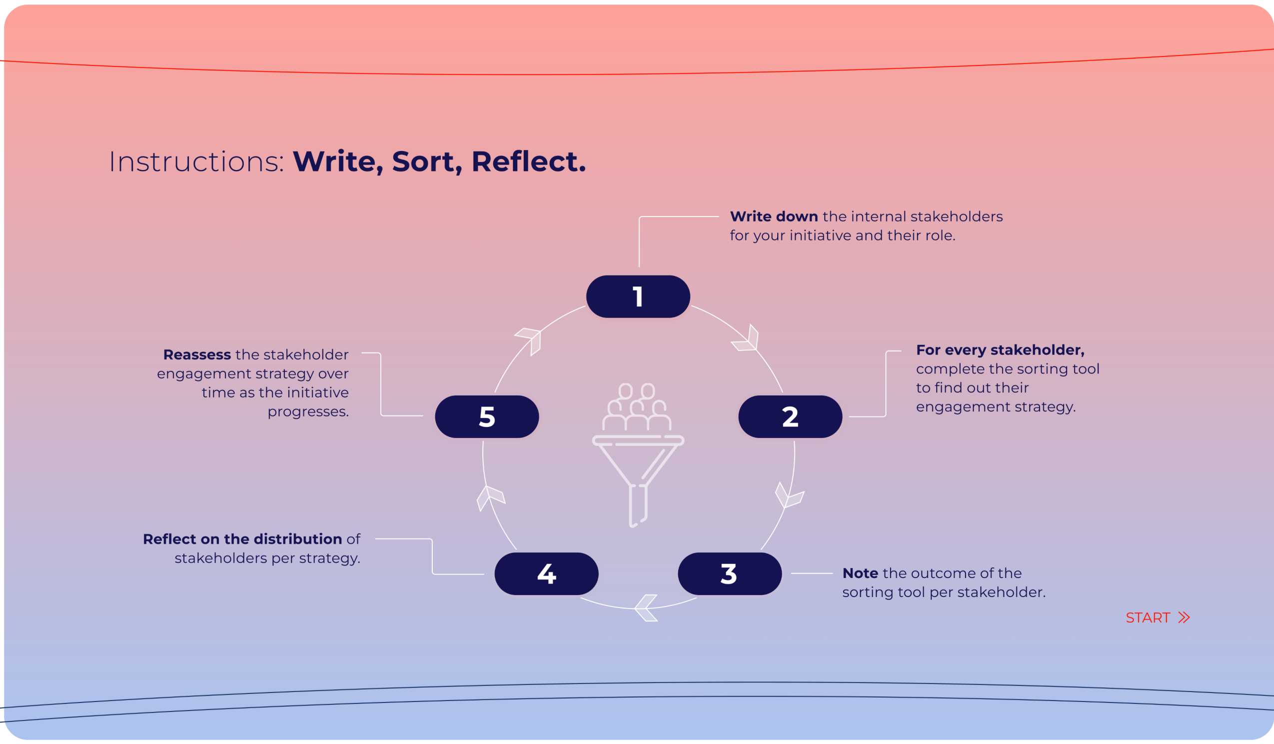


Figure 29: Explanation of the *process* of the decision-flow

STAKEHOLDER SELECTION

We begin the detailed explanation of the decision flow with the first step, which marks the start of the process. The user is asked to consider an internal stakeholder before answering the questions that follow (figure 30). This is the only step that does not follow a simple yes/no format. Selecting "no" would stop the process. Instead, users can explore potential internal stakeholders with the *Stakeholder Radar Tool (figure 32).*

Goal of the tool

Before the decision flow begins, it is desirable that users take a moment to thoughtfully consider who the internal stakeholders might be.

The Internal Stakeholder Discovery tool is designed to "tickle the brain", encouraging users to think beyond the obvious and explore the individuals who may influence others or be indirectly be impacted by the initiative.

Complication

At RSG, the organizational landscape is both project-driven and highly hierarchical. While project teams make decisions, influential stakeholders outside those groups still shape outcomes.

If a project team has not yet been assigned (before DG2, the Decision Gate 2 phase), it can create additional uncertainty about who is responsible for driving the initiative forward and who holds influence over decisions.

Adding to this complexity, Schiphol is organized into domains, clusters, and business areas. This leads to fragmented responsibilities and an unclear picture of who truly holds influence.

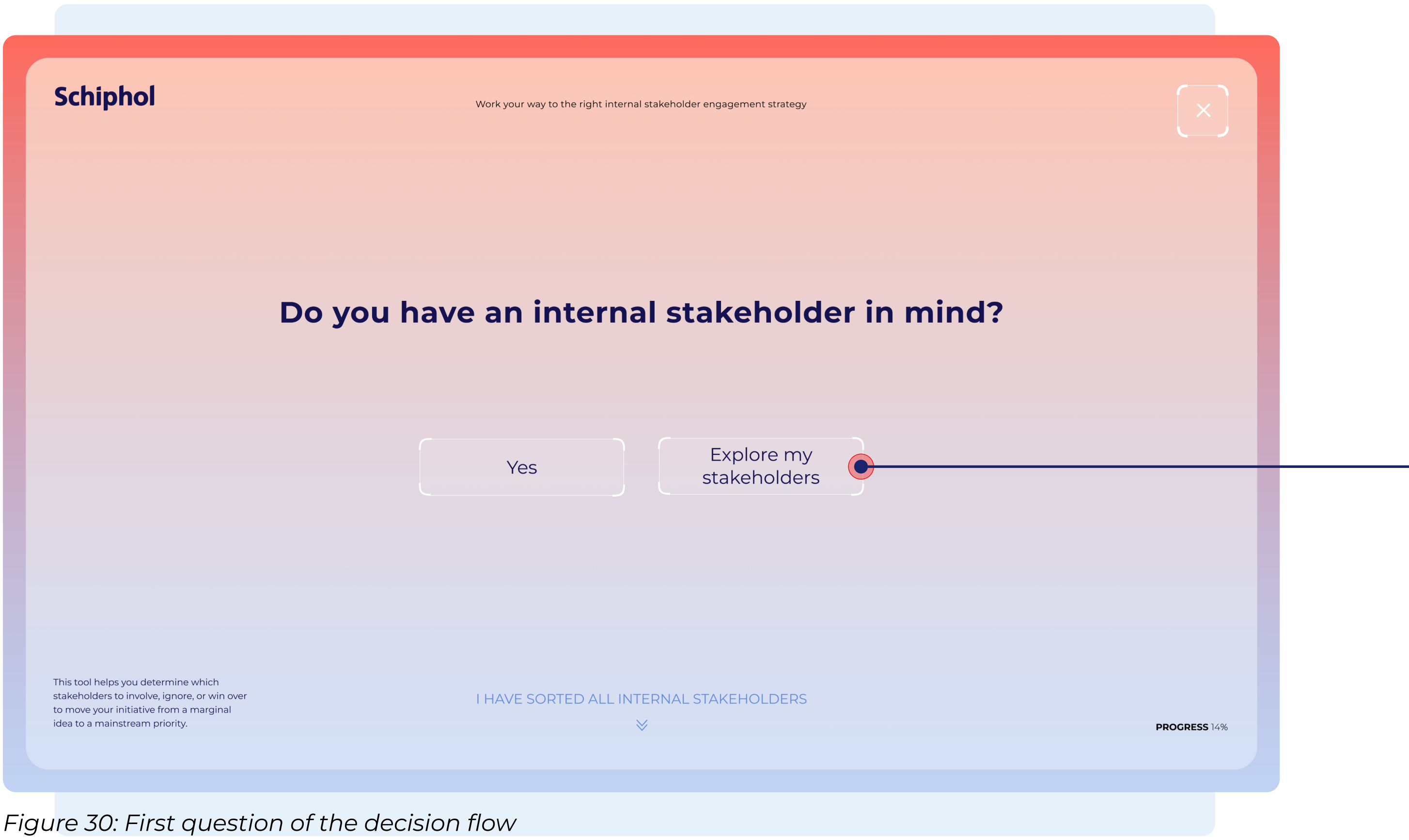


Figure 30: First question of the decision flow

Insights from the stakeholder co-creation session and the organizational structure experiment revealed that employees often lack awareness of the employee dynamics in other departments (chapter 7.3).

These gray zones make it difficult for teams to anticipate which individuals or groups could significantly affect an initiative's outcome, creating blind spots that can lead to unexpected resistance or project delays.

Solution

The Internal Stakeholder Radar tool is designed to help a user think beyond the usual suspects: those who are visibly impacted by or involved in an initiative. By visualizing two different layers of stakeholders (from clearly visible to those less obvious or "invisible"), it encourages broader thinking about who holds influence, who might be affected indirectly, and who can enable success (figure 31).

While the circles depict the relative "size" or scope of each group, the engagement sequence may vary by project. The ultimate aim is to uncover hidden stakeholders who might otherwise be overlooked, ensuring no critical perspectives are missed.

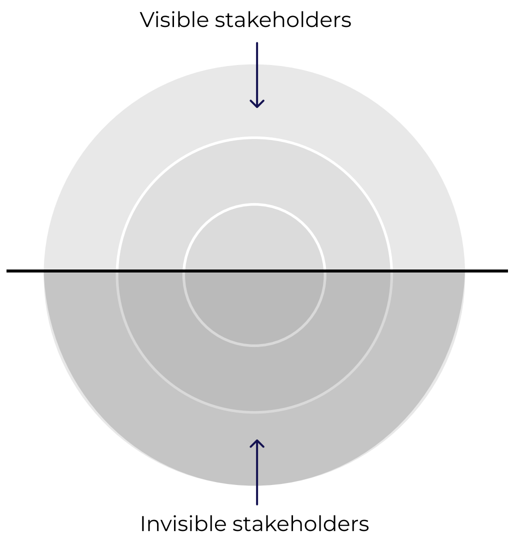


Figure 31: The added layer to the stakeholder radar

Tool

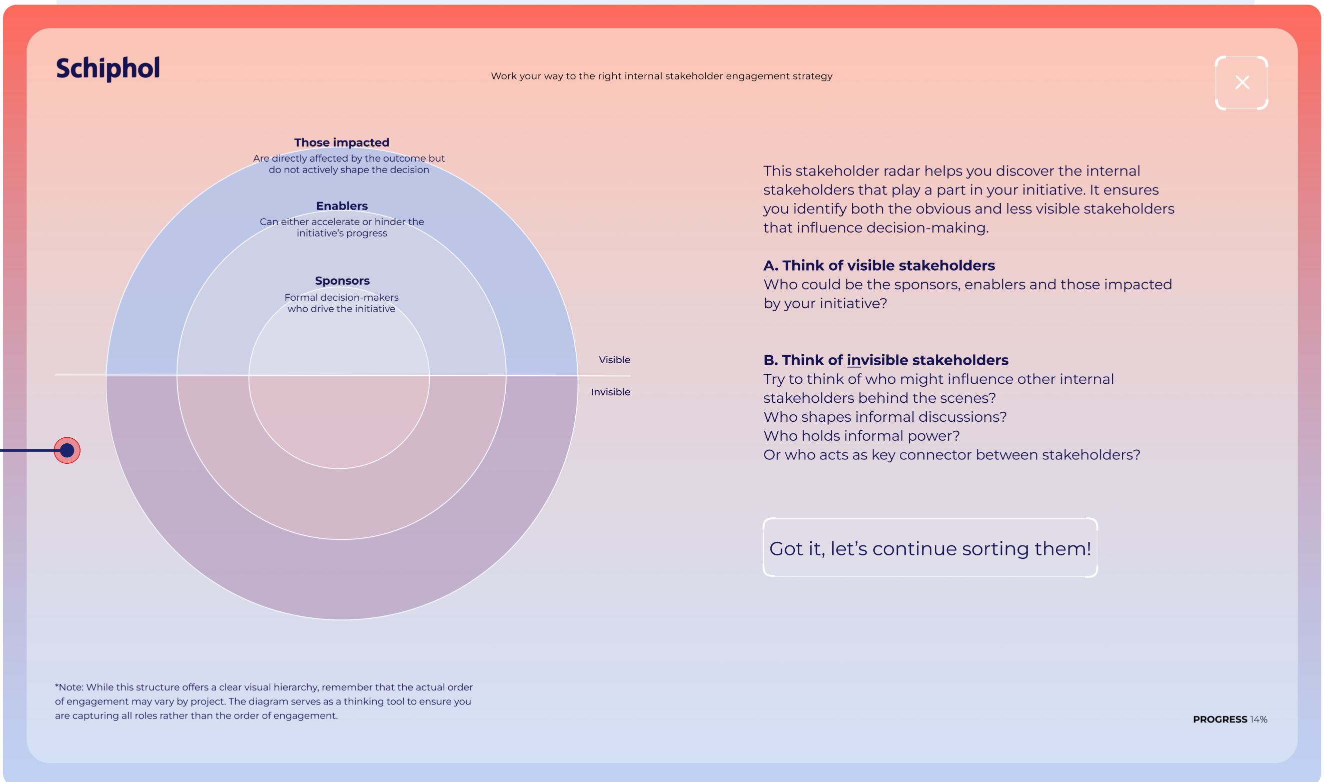


Figure 32: Stakeholder radar tool, developed to fit RSG organizational dynamics.

STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIZATION

After selecting an internal stakeholder, users are asked two questions that determine their level of influence and necessity for involvement. First, their influence needs to be assessed:

- Does this stakeholder have the power to significantly influence or block progress? (figure 34)

This question assesses whether the stakeholder holds decision-making authority or influence over the initiative. If no, they are unlikely to impact the progression of the project and therefore not need immediate engagement. If yes, their involvement is may be crucial and they will be directed to the second prioritization question:

- Is their buy-in needed now or in the next phase for the initiative to move forward? (figure 35)

Even if a stakeholder has high influence, they may not need to be engaged at this stage. This question helps ensure that attention is focused on stakeholders who are relevant to the current phase of the project. Preventing early involvement that could create unnecessary resistance or slow down the process as too many employees are involved.

These two questions replace a more complex prioritization tool (figure 33).

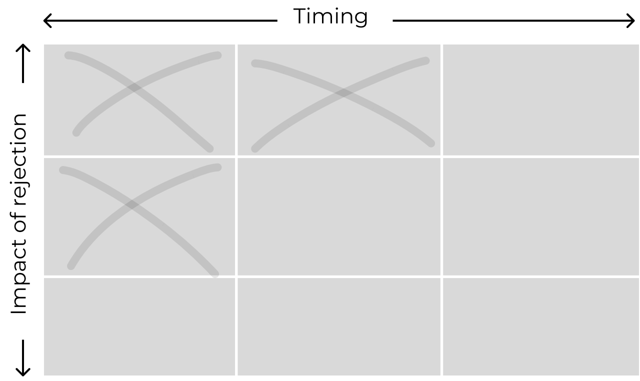


Figure 33: The initial idea of the priority matrix

The initial prioritization approach

In an earlier version of this step, stakeholder prioritization was done using a Stakeholder Prioritization Tool. Stakeholders were mapped based on (1) impact of rejection (how disruptive their opposition would be) and (2) timing of involvement (when their engagement is most critical).

Only high-impact stakeholders whose buy-in is needed now or soon would proceed to the urgency assessment step. While this tool provided a structured framework, it also introduced unnecessary complexity. Therefore the tool was replaced by the questions of figure 34 and 35.

While the prioritization matrix is no longer explicitly used, its core logic remains embedded in the decision flow. High-influence stakeholders who require immediate engagement continue through the process, while lower-influence stakeholders are assigned to strategies that do not require effort until a later stage. By replacing this tool with two clear questions, the decision flow retains its tactic intention (selective efforts) while improving usability and simplicity.

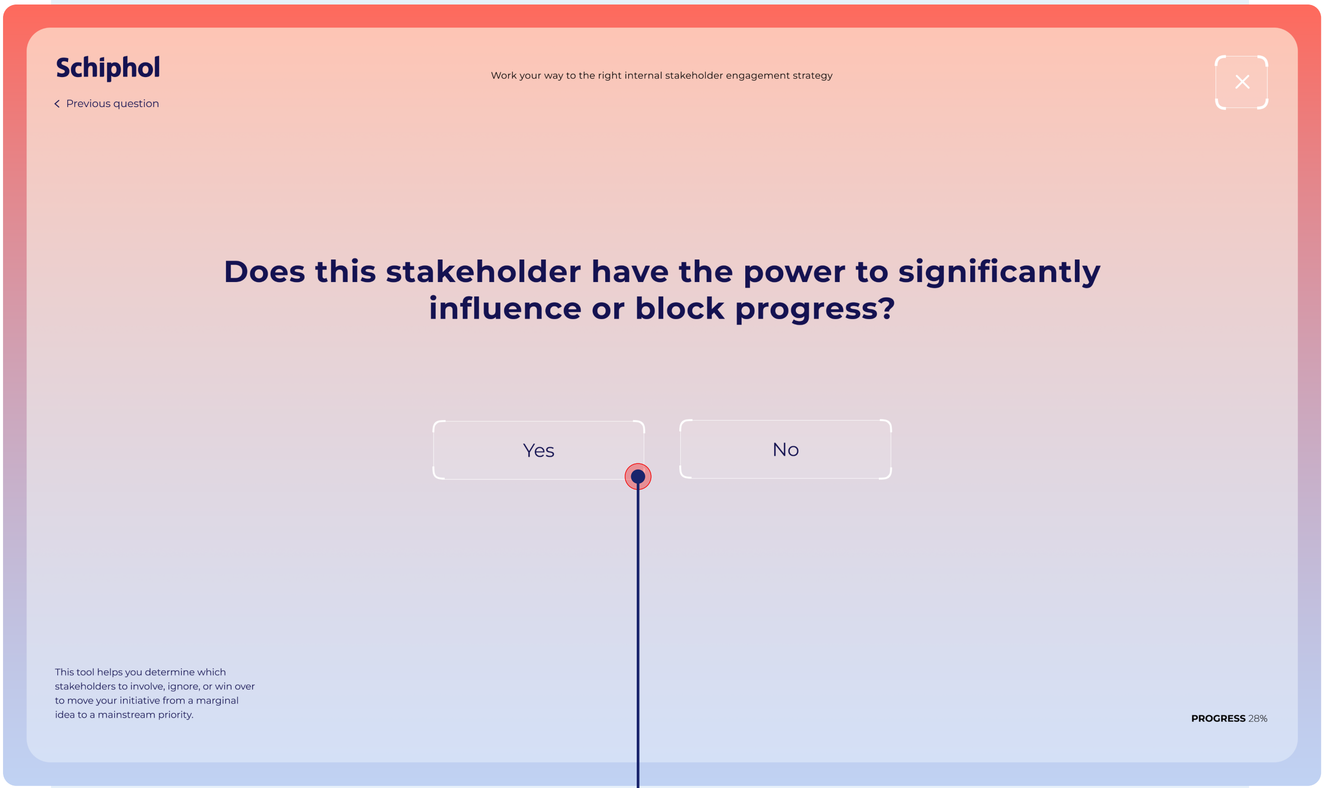


Figure 34: Question in the decision flow regarding the influence of a stakeholder

Figure 35: Question in the decision flow regarding the timing of involvement for an influential stakeholder

User is directed to figure 36

URGENCY AND COMPLACENCY

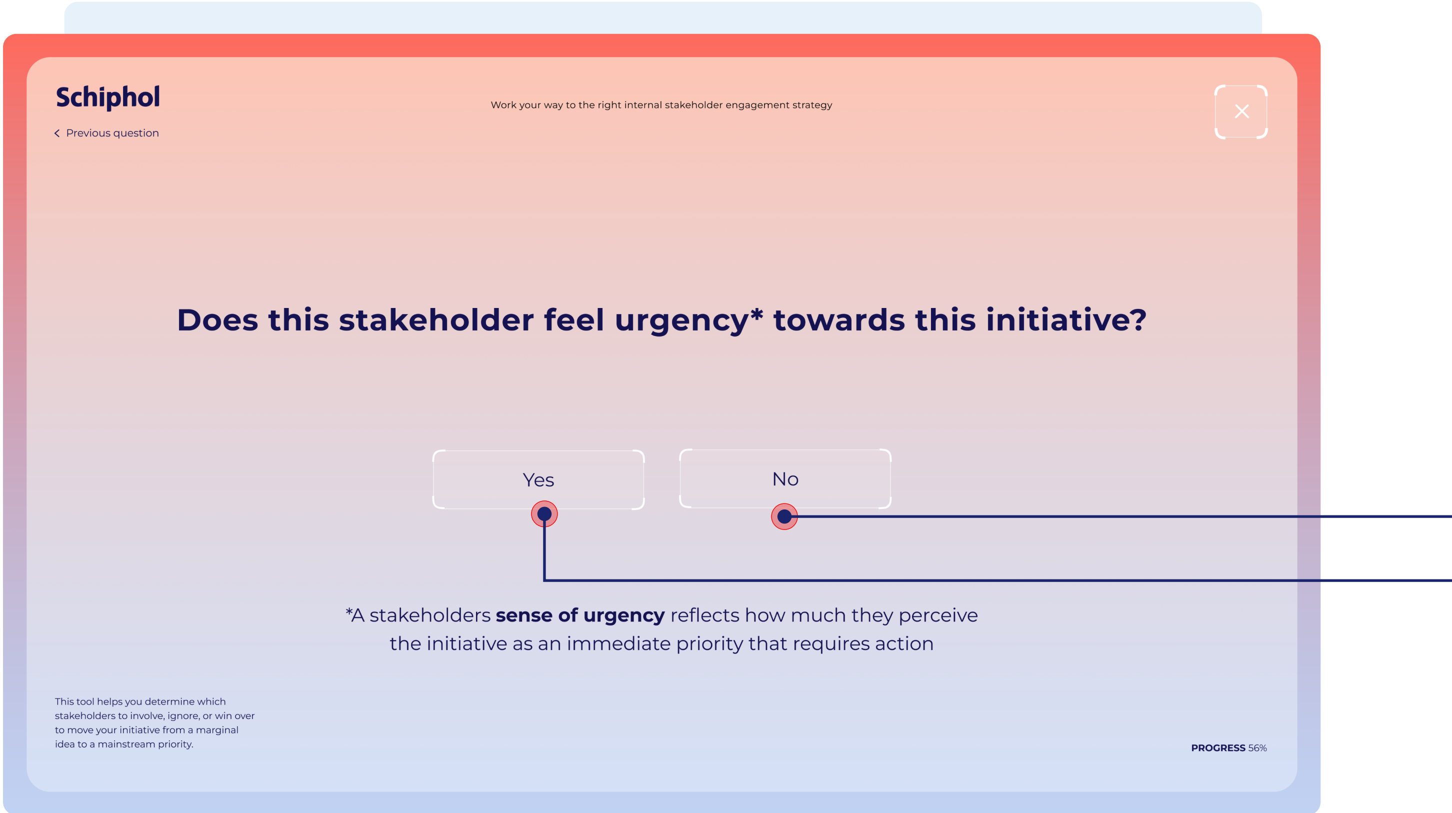


Figure 36: Addressing felt urgency for an influential stakeholder

Once stakeholders are prioritized with a double yes, the decision flow assesses their felt urgency toward the initiative. Without urgency, even key stakeholders may not take action, slowing progress toward mainstream adoption.

To check urgency, the decision flow asks:

“Does this stakeholder feel urgency towards this initiative?” (figure 36)

If no, the stakeholder is directed to Engagement Strategy 4: Build urgency and gain buy-in, ensuring the user is nudged towards taking action to have these internal stakeholders recognize the initiative as a priority (figure 38).

If yes, the tool tests for complacency (figure 37.)

A false sense of urgency

Complacency is not active resistance, but a passive assumption that no change is needed, which leads to inaction. (Kotter, 2008). A study on urgency gaps in interorganizational projects shows that these complacency asymmetries negatively impact innovation speed, as different stakeholders perceive urgency differently (Mitcheltree, 2023).

This suggests that similar urgency misalignments between different departments of RSG could also hinder the speed and effectiveness of strategic initiatives.

Internal stakeholders may express verbal urgency for an initiative but fail to take concrete steps to support it. This is a key indicator of complacency (Kotter, 2008).

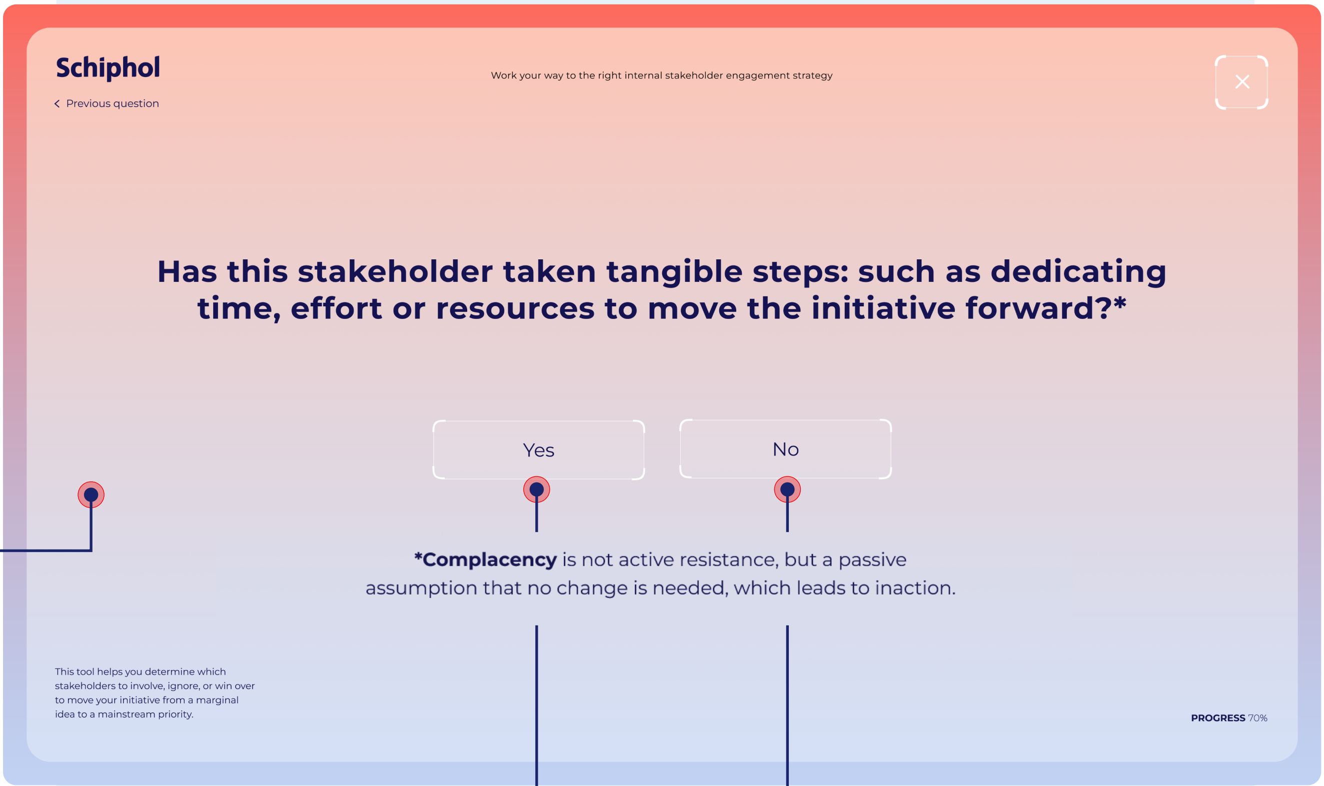


Figure 37 The built in complacency check

Figure 38: The following outcomes for important stakeholders, based on their perception (or lack) of urgency.

A check for complacency

To check for complacency, the decision flow includes a complacency check:

“Has this stakeholder taken tangible steps, such as dedicating time, effort, or resources to move the initiative forward?” (figure 37).

If a stakeholder supports an initiative in principle but has not taken any concrete action, this signals potential complacency. The user is explained that this stakeholder might have a false sense of urgency and is directed toward the low-urgency stakeholder strategy.

Key stakeholders who either lack urgency or display complacency are directed to Engagement Strategy 4: Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in. Users are assisted in determining an approach to taking action in figure 39. If the reason behind a stakeholder's low urgency is unclear, users are encouraged to explore the root cause using the pre-mortem tool (figure 41).

Goal of the tool

Engaging influential stakeholders who lack urgency is done to prevent misinterpretation of their resistance. Rather than making assumptions, the tool facilitates direct engagement, inviting stakeholders to share their perspectives.

The goal is to uncover why an internal stakeholder does not perceive the initiative as urgent. By understanding the root cause, users can determine the most effective buy-in strategy.

Complication

Simply asking "Why do you not feel urgency for what I am trying to accomplish?" might put the resistor in a resistor role even further into a defensive point of view. According to Patterson et al. (2012), direct "why" questions can often trigger defensiveness in high-stakes conversations. Also, chapter 5.3 showed operational employees often feel overlooked and disconnected with the strategic employees.

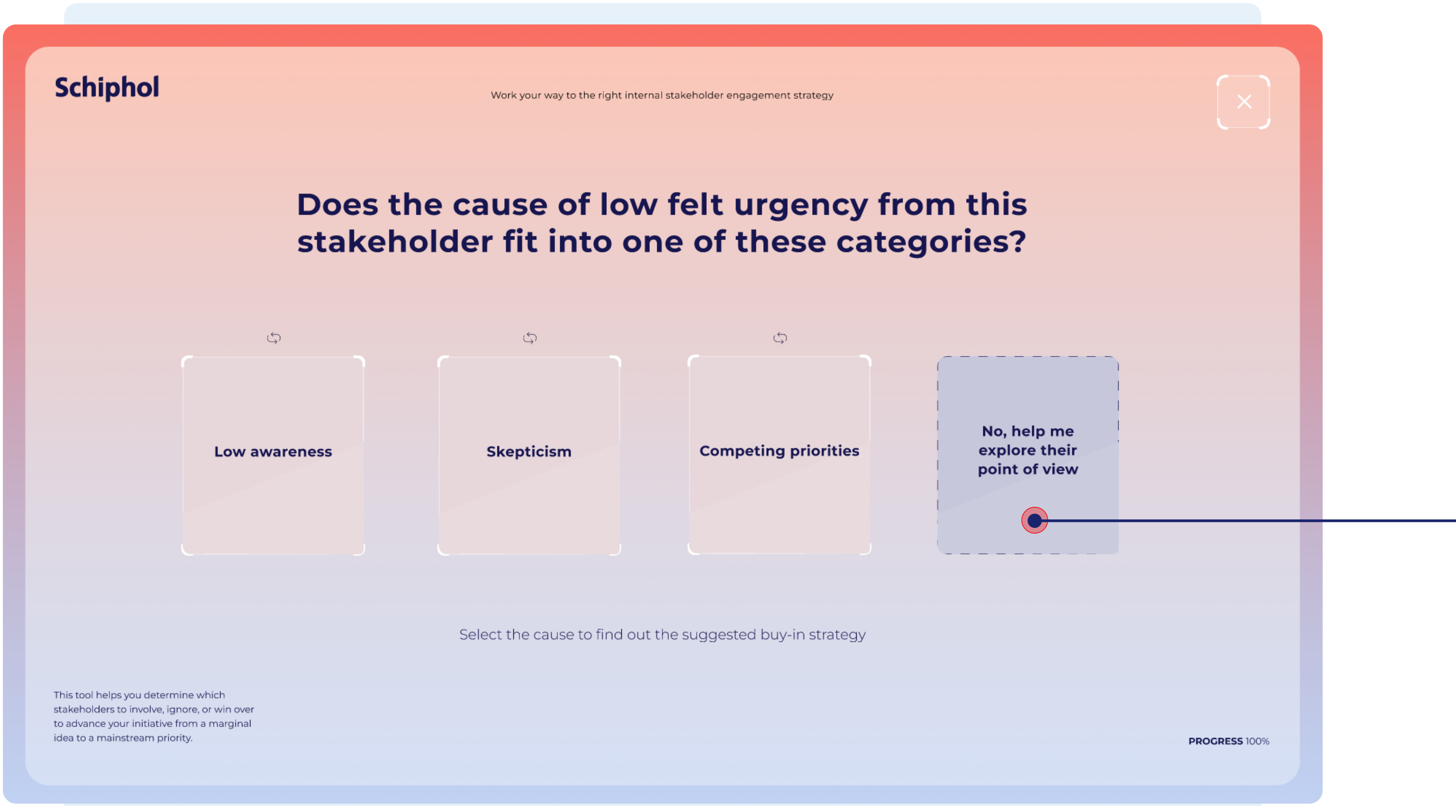


Figure 39: Location of the pre-mortem dialogue in the sorting tool.

Solution

Usual application of the pre-mortem technique is in app-development. It is done by a team of developers who collectively brainstorm by visualizing the potential risks and failures before the project goes live. They imagine a fiasco: a situation where the project has failed (or: died, hence the term pre-mortem) and think of why and how this could have happened (Klein, 2013).

Whereas Klein's pre-mortem technique involves a group collectively imagining a project's failure to anticipate risks, I introduce a new application (figure 40): the pre-mortem dialogue. Instead of a group exercise, I designed an approach to structure a conversation between a promotor and a resistor of a specific initiative at RSG.

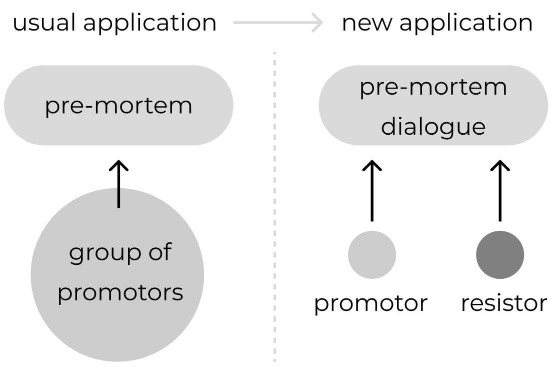


Figure 40: A new application of Klein's (2013) pre-mortum technique

By framing the discussion as a forward-looking exercise rather than a direct interrogation, the pre-mortem approach encourages honest sharing of concerns, reduces defensiveness, and provides a basis for mutual understanding between two employees of RSG with differing point of views. While this is not the main objective, the tools might help turn opposition into engagement as in the last step we reverse the failures and possible solutions are co-created.

Tool

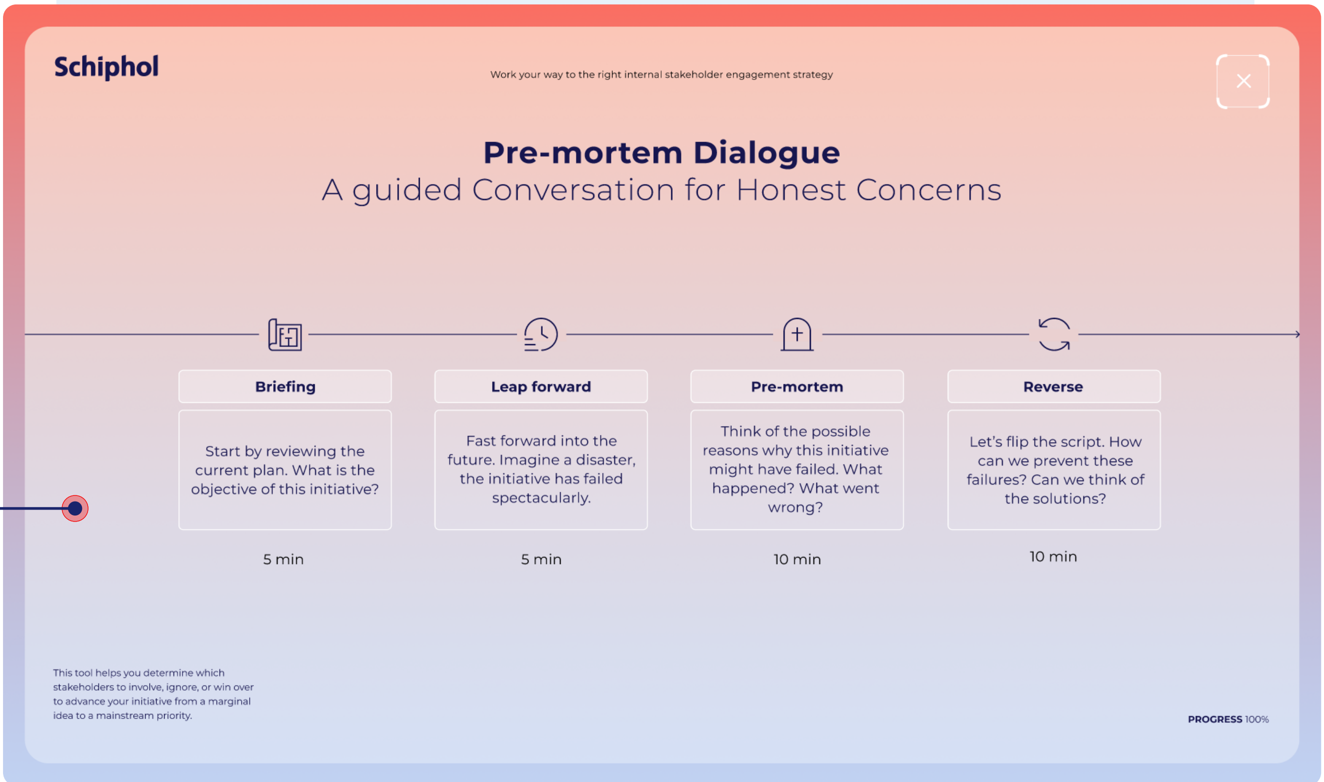


Figure 41: Pre-mortem dialogue - A guided conversation for honest concerns

REFLECT

After sorting all stakeholders, the final step for users is to reflect on their distribution across the engagement strategies and adjust the engagement plan where needed.

In the reflection task, users are asked to reflect on three problematic types of distribution (figure 42):

If too many stakeholders fall into 'Build Urgency & Gain Buy-in', engagement efforts may become too time-intensive, making it difficult to generate real progress. Stakeholders might be relocated to the 'Limit Attention' category, until the project progresses and the reassessment will take place.

A 'Keep Involved' category with too few stakeholders may indicate a lack of momentum. Ensuring a sufficient number of involved stakeholders strengthens continuity of a project.

Stakeholders placed in 'Limit Attention' should be reviewed carefully. Some may seem low-priority now but could pose challenges later. Reassessing whether any require more active engagement prevents unexpected hurdles.

Users reflect to ensure the outcome is realistic and balanced

These examples serve as prompts to encourage deeper reflection. Other notable patterns in stakeholder distribution may also emerge. By carefully considering the outcome of the tool, users ensure that their engagement strategy is both balanced and effective in moving the initiative from margin to mainstream.

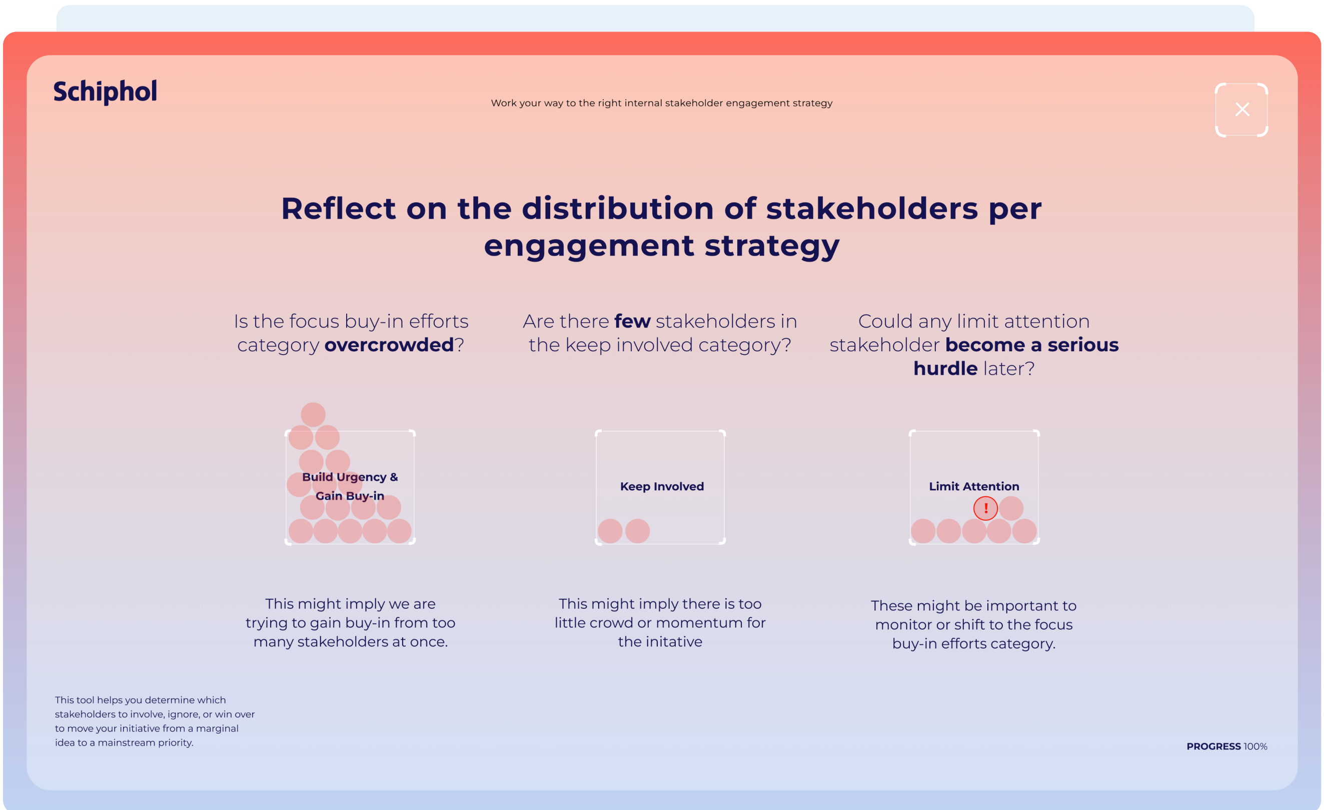


Figure 42: Stakeholder radar tool, developed to fit RSG organizational dynamics.

8.6 TRACING PATHS: HOW STAKEHOLDERS ARRIVE AT THEIR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Now that we have explored the tactical foundation (chapter 8.3), the engagement strategies that result from the decision flow (chapter 8.4), and the rationale behind the decision flow questions (chapter 8.5), we now turn to the final step: understanding the logic behind how stakeholders get sorted by the decision flow to arrive at their engagement strategy, bringing chapter 8 to an end.

The decision flow paths for each engagement strategy are illustrated in the following appendices.

Engagement Strategy 1: Use Commotion for Promotion. The stakeholder route leading to this strategy can be found in appendix I1.

Engagement Strategy 2: Limit Attention. The possible stakeholder routes to this strategy can be found in appendix I2. Note that there are three different paths leading to this outcome.

Engagement Strategy 3: Keep Involved. The stakeholder route leading to this strategy can be found in appendix I3.

Engagement Strategy 4: Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in. The possible stakeholder routes to this strategy can be found in appendix I4. Note that there are two different paths leading to this outcome.

CHAPTER 9

VALIDATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 9 describes how the way-of-working was validated through three methods: an Innovation Courtroom debate, scenario testing with two real projects, and usability testing with RSG employees. It summarizes key findings: strengths, weaknesses, and refinements for the tactical foundation and decision flow. Finally, based on the findings it offers practical short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations for implementing the solution within Royal Schiphol Group.

9.1 OVERVIEW OF VALIDATION APPROACH

To ensure the tool's relevance and usefulness, three complementary validation activities were conducted:

1. Validation of tactical foundation

First, the underlying tactical principles guiding the tool were put to the test through an interactive session: The innovation courtroom. Future users from the S&AP department were invited to critically debate the three tactical points forming the basis of the decision flow. This provided direct feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, and perceived risks of the tactics.

2. Scenario testing

The decision flow was applied to two real-world initiatives at RSG. Participants used the decision flow to sort actual stakeholders from their ongoing projects. This tested the tool's practicality, logic, and outcome distribution for these two cases, revealing how well it reflects or differs from the reality of stakeholder engagement.

3. Usability testing:

Finally, usability tests were conducted to assess how easily new users could understand and apply the tool. Participants were observed while sorting predefined stakeholders, allowing specific points of confusion or friction to be identified.

Together, these three validation steps provided both theoretical and practical insights into the tool's effectiveness and areas for improvement, ensuring that it is intuitive in use and applicable across different stakeholder environments.

9.2 VALIDATING THE TACTICAL FOUNDATION

To validate the tactical foundation, an **Innovation Courtroom** session was organized (figure 43). The objective of this session was to examine the proposed tactical foundation by inviting key stakeholders to actively challenge or defend the strategy. This interactive format provided direct feedback on the applicability, strengths, and potential pitfalls of the tactical foundation.

Figure 43: Setting the scene for the courtroom

Structure of the session

The session began with an introduction of the Innovation Courtroom, where participants were divided into two groups (figure 44). The Red Team took on the role of critics, tasked with questioning and challenging the strategy. The Green Team served as defenders, arguing in favor of the strategy's relevance and feasibility.

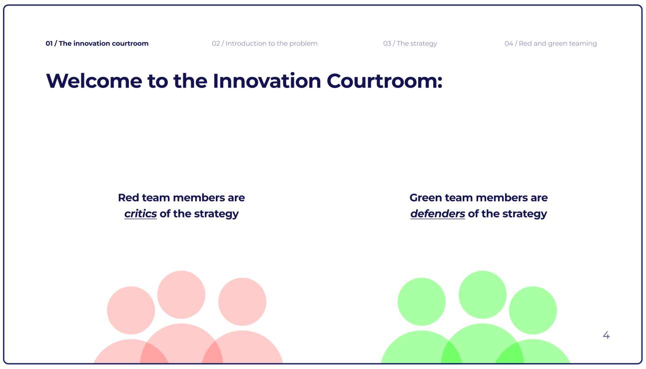


Figure 44: Participants were split in two teams.

Next, the problem framing was presented. The challenge of moving strategic initiatives, such as the multimodal initiative, from marginal to mainstream priorities was introduced. This context set the stage for critically evaluating the tactical approach. Following this, the tactical foundation itself was explained, by presenting the three tactical principles: valuing resistance, prioritizing selective efforts for stakeholder buy-in, and using commotion for promotion (figure 45).

Figure 45: Communication of the tactical foundation.

The core of the session was the debate. Both teams engaged in discussions to explore potential risks, strengths, and implications of the strategy. Each team first discussed their arguments internally and captured their opinions on post-its, grouped per tactical point.

After the preparation, both teams presented their defense or critique, summarizing their key arguments. A digitized version of the post-its made by each team can be found in appendix J.

Summary of arguments from the green team

The defenders found it relatively easy to generate multiple arguments supporting the strategy. Their key points included:

Tactic 1 - Value resistance:

- “Resistance allows us to improve the quality of outcomes and therefore we can create higher-quality solutions.”
- “Vocal critics should be involved early to make us able to delegate ownership outside the Innovation Hub.”
- “Transparency and open engagement increase trust and credibility in our department as a whole.”

Tactic 2 - Selective stakeholder buy-in:

- “Focusing efforts on high-influence stakeholders makes the approach more efficient.”
- “Early involvement of key decision-makers ensures alignment from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives.”

Tactic 3 - Use commotion for promotion:

- “Active discussions attract attention and enhance awareness for our ideas.”
- “Engaging in controversy allows us to reshape the narrative.”

Summary of arguments from the red team

The red team expressed that they found themselves in a more difficult position, resulting in fewer arguments compared to the defenders. However, their critiques provided valuable insights:

Tactic 1 - Value resistance:

- “Always welcoming resistance could pose credibility risks to our inventions if we do not handle them selectively.”

Tactic 2 - Selective stakeholder buy-in:

- “High-influence stakeholders often have limited time and might be the hardest to gain buy-in from.”
- “There is a risk of overemphasizing top-down engagement, which could leave ‘grassroots’ concerns unaddressed.”

Tactic 3 - Use commotion for promotion:

- “A very loud and influential “no” could unintentionally amplify opposition, potentially derailing the initiative.”

Overall conclusion on validation of tactics

Defenders found it more easy to come up with several arguments. Critics thought they were put in a more difficult position and had fewer arguments. Overall, they recognized strong points and strongly agreed with tactical point 1 and 2.

However, the third tactical point: Use commotion for promotion was questioned. As the both the green and red team expressed worries about a so to say *an influential no*: “a very loud and influential no, might cause more resistance. We should be careful with this tactic.”

Therefore, the decision flow was complemented with the question in figure 46. This question acts as a safeguard. It helps assess whether vocal resistance might influence others to oppose the initiative as well. This prevents unintentionally strengthening resistance and allows users to carefully decide whether to engage or limit attention.

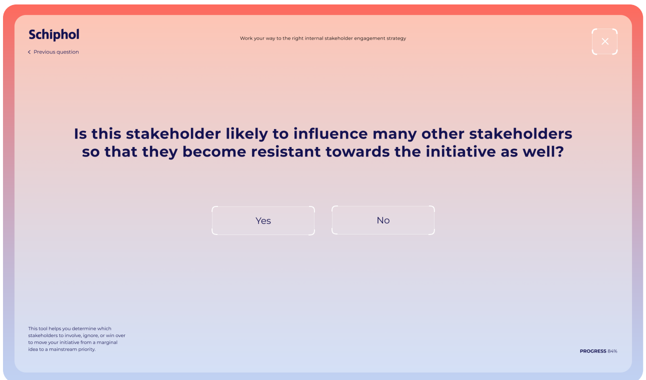


Figure 46: Additional check in the decision flow

9.3 SCENARIO TESTING

The goal of scenario testing was to validate whether the decision flow/sorting tool accurately reflect real-world stakeholder engagement dynamics in ongoing strategic initiatives. Specifically, it aimed to:

Assess practicality of the decision flow: Can participants easily apply the decision flow to their real cases?

Test its relevance and logic: Do the engagement strategies make sense based on their experience?

Evaluate outcome distribution: Is the distribution of stakeholders over the engagement strategies what participants expect, and do they offer new insights?

Gather feedback for improvement: What do participants suggest to make the decision flow better?

The selected cases were relevant as both employees were involved in transitioning strategic initiatives from margin to mainstream, both dealing with crowded internal stakeholder environments. Their ongoing experience made them ideal candidates to evaluate which outcomes the decision flow would suggest in both contexts.

Introduction to Case A

This participant from the Innovation Hub applied the decision flow to a case in which she was tasked with mapping the internal stakeholder landscape surrounding passenger experience and terminal operations. Her objective was to understand these areas beyond the organogram. The goal was to identify key challenges, project dynamics, and how the Innovation Hub could effectively support ongoing efforts. She already had created a list of relevant stakeholders, making her case ideal for testing the decision flow.

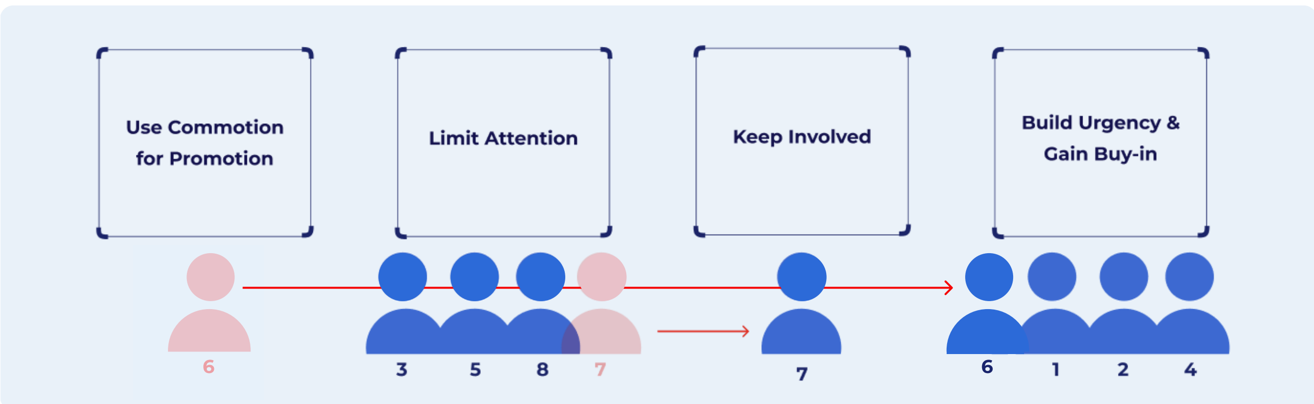


Figure 47: Result of scenario test A

Results scenario test case A (figure 47)

Practicality
The participant found the decision flow straightforward and easy to apply to her case. The binary decision structure (yes/no) forced her to reflect critically on each stakeholder. She liked how the decision flow helped her focus on what mattered at that moment:

“I like that it is an exercise you can do in the moment to help you keep focus.”

Relevance and logic
Most of the outcomes (6 out of 8) matched her expectations, and she appreciated the logic behind the sorting. The pre-mortem conversation advice also resonated well. However, two stakeholders were categorized differently than to her liking. One of these internal stakeholders she saw a valuable alie was placed in Limit Attention, because they had little formal power:

“I think this internal stakeholder does not have the power to stop it, however she can very well <u>empower</u> the initiative. You can indeed limit attention and do the project without her, but you don’t want to. Having them aboard can bring so much engagement value.”

This feedback showed that the decision flow needed to better account for positive, low-power stakeholders who still add value.

Therefore, an additional question was added to the decision flow (figure 48)

The result from this added question is that the stakeholders who, despite not being influential, do help a positive push end up at engagement strategy 3: keep involved.

Outcome distribution
Thing that we note is that the stakeholders that came to mind first almost all ended up in the build urgency and Gain Buy-in engagement strategy.

Feedback for improvement

- Clarify Complacency: The participant suggested making it clearer how a stakeholder’s inaction results in being categorized as low urgency, even if they seem positive. Better explanation of this link would avoid confusion.

- More advice for ‘Keep Involved’ engagement strategy: She liked the concrete actions listed under Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in and suggested adding similar advice for Keep Involved. She mentioned to think of the reason why their involvement is needed and tailor the strategy accordingly: for example: through sharing information or ensuring visibility.

Conclusion case A

Even though some outcomes were unexpected, the participant said it made her think more critically about engagement strategies. The sorting tool gave her clear focus and useful advice, especially for building buy-in. Her feedback led to immediate improvements in the decision flow.

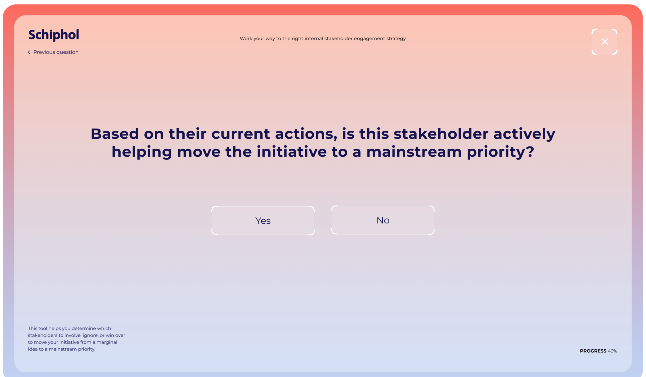


Figure 48: Result of scenario test B

Introduction to Case B

The second scenario test was conducted with a participant from the Master Planning team. He applied the decision flow to the UFP project, where he was part of the design working group. One of the main challenges he experienced in this project was the involvement of too many stakeholders, which slowed down progress significantly. The stakeholder environment was crowded, with overlapping responsibilities and opinions making it difficult to move forward efficiently. The decision flow was tested as a way to bring structure to the stakeholder environment.

Results scenario test case B (figure 49)

Practicality

The participant could easily apply the decision flow to multiple stakeholders and quickly walk through the decision flow. It fit well into the context of listing and reflecting on many stakeholders in a short time.

The participant chose to apply the decision flow first to internal stakeholders, and later to external ones, showing the decision flow is flexible to different stakeholder scopes.

Relevance and logic

The participant agreed with all (10 of out 10) of the decision flow's outcomes for the stakeholders he assessed. As the participant mentioned: "Buy-in from internal stakeholders was not the problem in my case. The challenge lies in gaining buy-in from the external stakeholders, as they had competing priorities." Therefore, first the internal stakeholders where sorted, followed by external stakeholders.

The participant highlighted how external stakeholders like company X and company Y had more complicated, competing interests, which aligned with the sorting tool assigning them to Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in.

Outcome distribution

All internal stakeholders ended up in Keep Involved, which aligned with the participant's experience: they were generally supportive and not blockers.

External stakeholders, especially company X and company Y leadership, often ended up in Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in, reflecting their influence and resistance due to competing priorities.

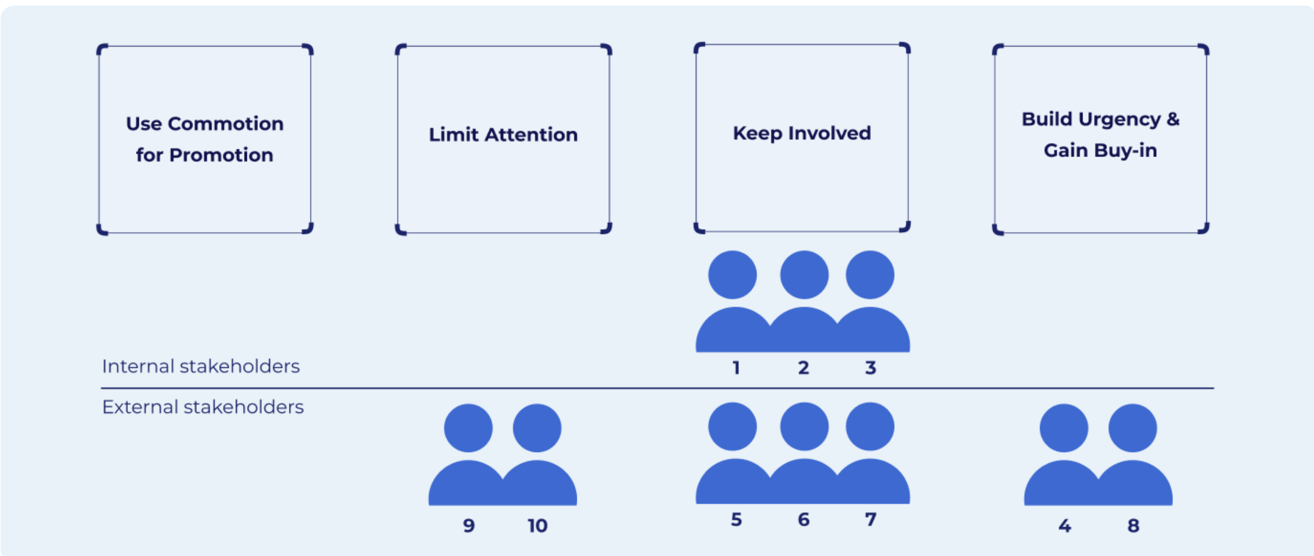


Figure 49: Result of scenario test B

Through using the sorting tool, the participant reconfirmed that too many stakeholders were actively involved. However, he mentioned that he was not in the position to exclude these stakeholders from the project team. Therefore, even if he would like to move some stakeholders to the limit attention category, this was not realistic.

Feedback for improvement

- Clarify stakeholder focus: Initially, there was some confusion about the scope, whether the sorting tool focused on internal departments/teams or individual people. Once clarified that it was about individual internal stakeholders, the participant was able to proceed smoothly.

- Stakeholder turnover consideration: He mentioned high turnover (e.g., staff shifting roles), meaning stakeholder dynamics shift over time. Digitizing the outcome of the sorting tool and allowing periodic revisits to update stakeholder mapping would be valuable to reflect these changes.

- Managing large stakeholder groups: Given the participant's challenge with too many people slowing the project, a possible improvement is adding tips or reflection points on how to reduce unnecessary involvement or manage large stakeholder groups strategically.

Conclusion case B

This scenario test confirmed that the decision flow is not only practical for internal stakeholder engagement but also applicable to external stakeholders. It successfully helped the participant make sense of the stakeholder environment, providing clear guidance on where to focus engagement efforts.

Overall conclusion of scenario testing

The scenario tests showed that the decision flow is practical, flexible, and encourages critical reflection.

Both participants mentioned that applying the sorting tool made them think carefully about each stakeholder's role, influence, and engagement strategy. Even when they disagreed with an outcome, it helped them reassess their reasoning and sharpen their awareness.

Participants were remarkably confident in answering the yes/no questions, and they quickly became familiar with the flow as they sorted each stakeholder one by one.

The sorting tool proved flexible enough to be used for both internal and external stakeholders.

An important insight was that participants not only considered direct stakeholders but also became more aware of indirect influencers. This confirmed the added value of the "invisible layer" radar. Additionally, when answering whether a stakeholder had power, participants often thought beyond the individual and considered who that stakeholder needed to keep satisfied, revealing how influence works in layers.

In total, 18 stakeholders were assessed, with participants agreeing on 16 outcomes.

Interestingly, in 2 cases, internal stakeholders were actively involved in the project, but the participant was unclear about their exact role or reason for involvement.

9.4 USABILITY TESTING

Usability testing was chosen as the evaluation method because it allows for direct observation of how users interact with the sorting tool, highlighting any points of confusion or misalignment between the sorting tool's design and user expectations (Nielsen, 1994). In the case of this usability test, it specifically assessed learnability by researching how easily first-time users understood and where able to work with the sorting tool.

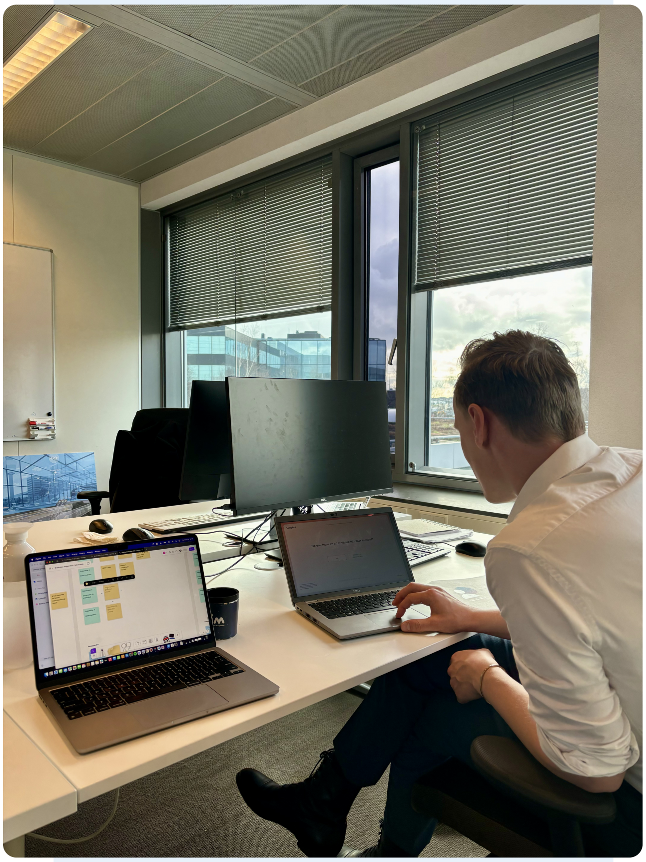


Figure 50: Usability test setup at SHG

Setup

The usability test was conducted with 4 participants from the S&AP department. The test was designed to assess both the sorting tool's functionality and the participants' understanding of the stakeholder engagement strategies. Two usability tests were conducted digitally, while the other two took place in office at SHG (Schiphol Hoofdgebouw) (figure 50 & 51).

Usability test flow

Participants were first asked to explore the "Learn more" section to assess their understanding of the sorting tool's purpose and instructions. After this, they were introduced to a case about rolling out new gloves for baggage handlers (see Appendix H). They were then tasked with sorting four internal stakeholders one by one, based on brief descriptions. These descriptions were written in such a way that users could clearly determine whether the answer to each question was *yes* or *no*. The goal was to evaluate whether they reached the expected engagement strategy by answering the questions in the decision flow.

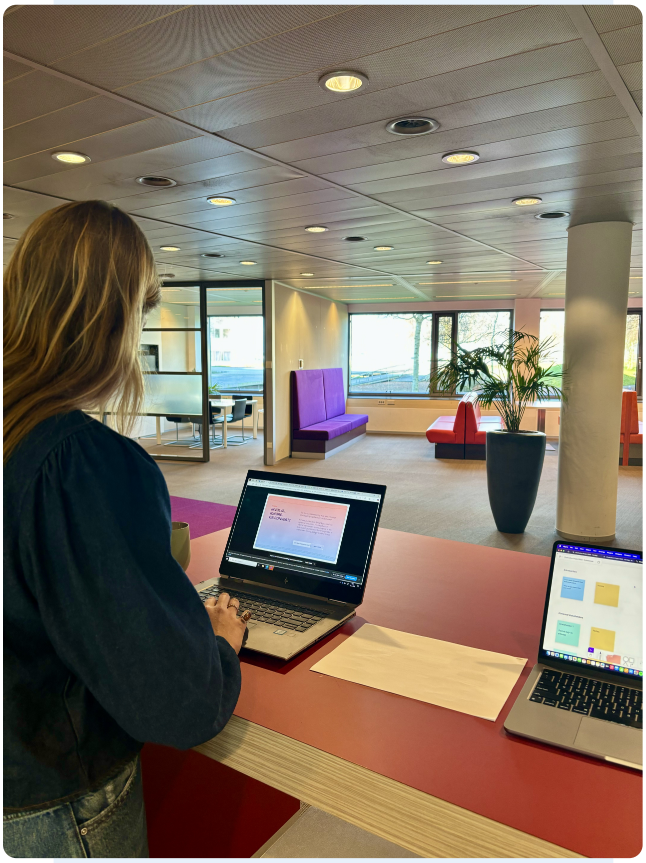


Figure 51: Decision flow in use by RSG employee

Throughout the test, observations were made regarding ease of use, understanding of engagement strategies, and any points of confusion, especially around the questions.

Key findings

Results of the usability test can be found in table 4.

Positive feedback

Overall, participants found the decision flow clear, structured, and intuitive, especially for sorting stakeholders 1, 2, and 4. They described the sorting tool as well-organized, with comments like "logically organized" (participant 1) and "very structured and easy to follow" (participant 3). Additionally, they noted the sorting tool's usefulness at the start of a project or in moments when a project feels stuck and lacks the desired progress.

Challenges

All participants struggled with sorting Stakeholder 3 due to uncertainty around the stakeholder's level of influence. While the intended engagement strategy was Commotion for Promotion, participants perceived this stakeholder as highly influential because of their informal power.
As a result, instead of classifying them as low-influence (as intended), they assigned them as a high influencer and ended up at the Build Urgency and Gain Buy-in strategy.

This highlights that the specific person fulfilling the stakeholder role significantly impacted participants' interpretation of influence. This was not clearly conveyed in the stakeholder description.

Some participants experienced difficulty differentiating between engagement strategy 1 and 2. Feedback such as "the difference between strategy 1 and 2 is not clear to me" indicated that the distinctions between strategy types could be made clearer between Commotion for Promotion and Limit Attention.

Limitations of the usability test

A first limitation of this usability test is the small number of participants (n=4). While Nielsen (1994) argues that testing with five users can uncover around 80% of usability issues, a larger sample would provide more robust insights and greater variability in user behavior.

Secondly, the role of the researcher may have influenced participants' openness. Since the usability tests were conducted by me, the sorting tool's designer, participants may have felt less comfortable sharing critical feedback. This phenomenon, known as social desirability bias, is a common limitation in user testing (Sauro & Lewis, 2016).

Table 4: Results of decision flow usability tests indicate difficulty sorting stakeholder 3

	Learn more	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	Stakeholder 4
Participant 1	✓	✓	✓	?	✓
Participant 2	✓	✓	✓	!	✓
Participant 3	✓	✓	✓	!	✓
Participant 4	✓	✓	?	!	✓

Lastly, the case descriptions did not include personality traits of the individuals fulfilling the stakeholder roles. As a result, participants sometimes found it difficult to assess questions about the influence of a stakeholder, based solely on the role description. For example, although a stakeholder was intended to have low influence, participants noted that, based on their experience, the person in that role could exert significant informal influence, which affected their decision-making.

Minor improvements were made based on findings from usability testing.
A clearer distinction between stakeholders falling under engagement strategies 1 and 2 was added to the 'Learn more' section, as participants indicated confusion between these strategies.

A back button was introduced after 2 out of 4 participants expressed a desire to revise their choices, particularly upon realizing a misclassification (noted in feedback such as "What was my response again for the previous question, can I go back?").

Additionally, the "Sort another stakeholder" button was made more prominent, as 2 out of 4 participants overlooked it and exited the decision flow entirely when attempting to proceed to the next stakeholder.

The implications of the remaining findings are further discussed in the chapter 9.5: recommendations.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

To implement the way-of-working effectively, RSG is advised to follow a phased approach. Following the principles of continuous improvement, the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle (Isniah et al., 2020) supports starting small, testing, adjusting based on feedback, and gradually scaling up. This phased method ensures that the way-of-working can be refined and tailored to the needs of its users, rather than relying on a one-time, large-scale rollout.

Recommendations are therefore divided into short-, mid-, and long-term actions.

Short-term
The emphasis is on further developing and optimizing the way-of-working based on initial feedback. This includes refining usability and testing the pre-mortem dialogue and stakeholder radar tool.

Mid-term
Once the way-of-working foundation is solid, the focus shifts to implementation in S&AP department.

Long-term
After the sorting tool has been in use for an extended period, the focus moves to evaluation and learning.

Short-term (0 - 6 months)

Usability testing with more users: conduct usability tests with a larger group of employees to gather more feedback.

Research manipulation of the decision flow: as users become familiar with the sorting tool, there is a risk they may answer questions strategically to reach preferred outcomes. Therefore, manipulation should be further researched to explore if this has a negative effect on the effectiveness of the decision flow.

Digitization of outcomes: develop a basic digital version of the decision flow to save stakeholder sorting outcomes, track the distribution of stakeholders per engagement strategy and allow users to revisit and adjust outcomes over time.

Test the pre-mortem dialogue effectiveness: Evaluate how effectively the pre-mortem dialogue helps users engage stakeholders who lack urgency without triggering defensiveness.

Mid-term (6 - 18 months)

Expand the scope: Currently, the decision flow focuses solely on questions related to individual stakeholders. However, stakeholder engagement is strongly influenced by the broader project context. To improve the sorting tool, additional questions should be added that assess the situation as a whole.

Embed Periodic Review Moments (Project Progression): Integrate clear review moments within project workflows to reassess stakeholder engagement strategies as the project progresses.

Embed Review Moments for Stakeholder Turnover: Include a specific trigger to revisit stakeholder sorting when internal roles change, e.g., when an employee leaves or moves to a new position.

Long-term (18+ months)

Evaluate the effectiveness of the way-of-working: After one year of implementation, assess if and how the use of the sorting tool has helped employees of S&AP move their initiatives from margin to mainstream.

Monitor and learn from usage Patterns: RSG should analyze how the way-of-working is being used across departments. This includes identifying which engagement strategies are most frequently applied and spotting patterns, such as whether certain teams consistently involve too many or too few stakeholders. Monitoring these usage trends provides valuable insight into how the sorting tool is applied in practice.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The conclusion summarizes the key findings, explains how the designed way-of-working addresses the initial challenge, and reflects on how the design requirements have been met.

The initial question of this project was: How can a way-of-working be designed to help employees, specifically from the S&AP department, move strategic initiatives from marginal idea to mainstream priority throughout RSG?

Qualitative research methods uncovered the underlying challenge. The research showed that fragmented urgency perceptions among RSG employees prevent initiatives from gaining traction and achieving organizational priority. Long-term strategic innovations struggle to gain adoption because they often do not align with the immediate priorities of key decision-makers. This leads to a low sense of urgency and limits the active involvement of influential internal stakeholders. This is further confirmed by the workforce persona analysis, which reveals that only a minority of RSG employees have a long-term focus in their daily work.

To address this challenge, the project focused on designing a structured way-of-working that identifies key stakeholders, exposes their urgency perceptions, and offers actionable strategies to deal with the fragmented sense of urgency among RSG employees.

A tactical foundation was introduced to guide this approach, encouraging a new strategic mindset among S&AP employees. This foundation is built on three key tactical points: valuing resistance, prioritizing high-influence stakeholders first, and leveraging debate to increase visibility. Together, these tactics help ensure efforts are focused where they have the greatest impact.

Through the decision flow, employees decide whether to ignore, involve, or convert stakeholders based on their answers regarding stakeholder influence and felt urgency.

The final design meets the four key requirements that were defined in Chapter 6:

Stakeholder identification: The Stakeholder Radar, with its invisible layer, nudges users to consider not only obvious stakeholders but also those influencing behind the scenes.

Urgency assessment: Felt urgency is assessed only for influential stakeholders, with a complacency check included to flag false urgency.

Actionable insights: Each stakeholder ‘falls’ into a category, providing clear advice on engagement. Reflection on the outcomes ensures the strategy is balanced and effective.

Usability: Usability testing showed that the decision flow is clear, structured, and easy to use. Participants quickly understood the yes/no structure. Scenario testing confirmed the tool’s practicality, relevance, and ability to bring clarity to complex stakeholder environments.

CHAPTER 11

LIMITATIONS AND REFLECTION

This chapter discusses the limitations of the project, including the constraints of the qualitative research method used. Key factors that impacted the outcome of the study were the scope of the research, reliance on certain assumptions, and selective focus on specific departments within RSG.

The chapter, and therefore the project as a whole, concludes with a reflection, both on the project itself and on my personal learning experience.

11.1 LIMITATIONS

Researcher bias

Since this study was highly qualitative, there’s a chance that researcher bias influenced the note-taking during the interviews. The notes were used to create statement cards, but because they were selectively written, the data reflects my own perspective. Even though I tried to minimize this by reviewing and revising the notes shortly after each interview to avoid memory bias, it's important to acknowledge that the data still has some level of researcher bias.

Over-reliance on subjective data

The insights from the discovery phase rely mostly on subjective data. I did not do much quantification, and while the literature supports the findings, relying on personal input means the conclusions are a bit open to interpretation. This limits how broadly the results can be applied and should be kept in mind when assessing the findings.

Selective focus on departments

I mainly focused on the Strategy & Airport Planning (S&AP) staff department and the Operations business department because I had direct contacts there. While I also reached out to other staff departments like Risk & Audit and HR, I decided to limit the focus to one business unit. I didn’t engage with employees from the Commercial and Infrastructure departments because the collaboration with S&AP didn’t seem to cause any major friction based on my unstructured interviews. However, it could be useful to expand the sample to include those departments, which might lead to new insights or themes in the analysis.

Internal stakeholders represent the interests of external stakeholders

For the sake of scoping, I focused on designing a way of working to tackle the issue of fragmented urgency perceptions among internal stakeholders. However, it’s important to note that most projects at Schiphol involve external stakeholders, and some internal stakeholders represent their interests. If an external stakeholder’s interests change, internal stakeholders tend to follow. This could influence the findings, so it might be worth looking into how external factors impact internal dynamics. For example, if regulations or public opinions shift, that could change how internal stakeholders act.

Dependence on RSGs willingness to change

For the way-of-working to be adopted, the organization needs to be willing to change how things are currently done. This is a limitation that comes with any initiative that requires organizational change. To minimize this dependence, I made sure to heavily involve the S&AP employees during both the development and evaluation phases of the project, ensuring their feedback and buy-in throughout the process. In the end, its success depends on the willingness of S&AP teams to adapt and embrace this way-of-working. In the future, this could become a larger issue while exploring if the way-of-working can be scaled to other departments of RSG that might also benefit from it.

11.2 REFLECTION

Reflection on the project

The design challenge focused on moving strategic initiatives from the margins to the mainstream within RSG. As I developed the workforce personas, it became clear that there is a significant imbalance between short-term and long-term work horizons.

The ratio in which these personas are represented at RSG helped me understand why gaining widespread involvement and support for long-term strategic innovations is so difficult.

Recognizing this imbalance, I decided to focus on the lack of urgency it creates. I became convinced that if employees feel a strong sense of urgency for a project, anything is possible. We've seen this in times of crisis, where projects like lifting aids and time slots moved from idea to implementation at an incredible pace.

This inspired me to design for urgency, ensuring that strategic innovations are not only recognized but actively prioritized .

At times, I questioned whether I was truly solving a problem. However, in conversations with employees, both those focused on short-term operations and those working on long-term strategies, everyone recognized the issue and saw the value in addressing it. This made me realize that sometimes, solving a problem starts with exposing it. A major part of why my result is an answer to the design challenge is that it makes the imbalance and its consequences visible.

Looking back, I recognize the relativity of what can be achieved within the scope of this project. In just over 100 days, I was able to complete an entire design process: from exploring the problem to developing, testing, and refining a concrete way-of-working. However, organizational change is a long-term process that extends way beyond this project. While I was not able to create a solution for the problem as a whole, the value of my research lies in making the underlying problem visible. By exposing how fragmented urgency perceptions hinder strategic initiatives, I hope to have provided a starting point for continued reflection and action within RSG.

Personal reflection

Being able to focus on the complexities of a large organization, at the beginning of my career was a very valuable experience. While my research focused on the organization of Royal Schiphol Group, the insights provide valuable learnings that can be useful in many other organizations that I will encounter during the rest of my career as a strategic designer.

A personal highlight during this project was attending my first professional conference (figure 52). It gave me the opportunity to see how my research connects to broader conversations within the field, which sparked my enthusiasm for this research project.

At the start of this project, I had the intention to carefully plan each step from October through March. I quickly learned that letting go of rigid plans and allowing interviews and conversations to guide the process proved far more insightful. Giving space for unexpected findings, ultimately made the project stronger and taught me the value of flexibility and letting go of control a bit.

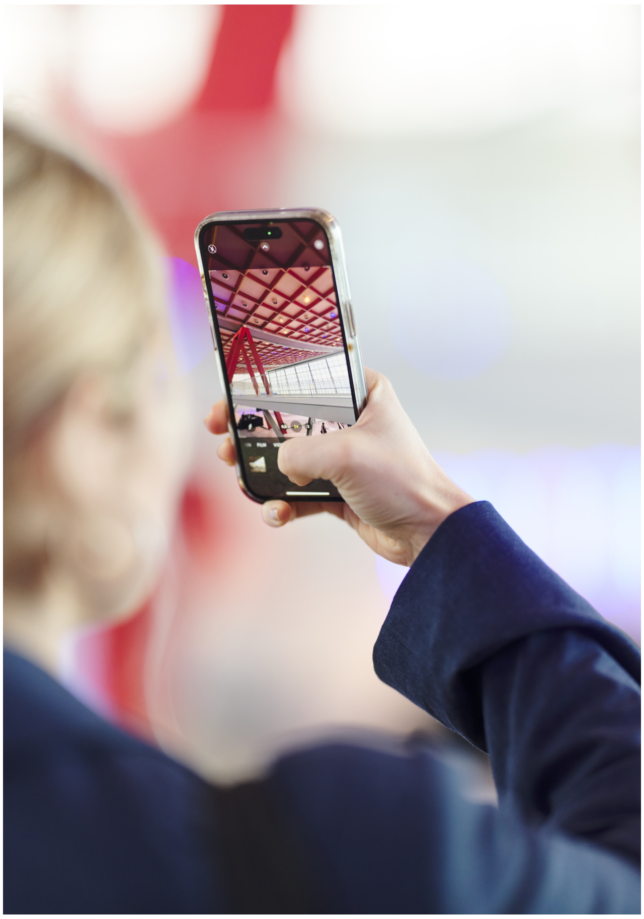


Figure 52: This is me! Taken by the photographer at the Seas to Skies conference on 03/12/2024

REFERENCES

Bossaert, E., Mykoniatis, G., Rommerts, M., & Van Veen, O. (2024, December 3). Common drivers and barriers for greener mobility and more digitisation [Expert roundtable]. Seas to Skies Conference, Brussels Airport, Belgium.

Bratterud, H., Burgess, M., Fasy, B. T., Millman, D. L., Oster, T., & Sung, E. (2020). The Sung Diagram: Revitalizing the Eisenhower Matrix. In A. V. Pietarinen, P. Chapman, L. Bosveld-de Smet, V. Giardino, J. Corter, & S. Linker (Eds.), Diagrammatic Representation and Inference. Diagrams 2020. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, 12169. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54249-8_43

Damanpour, F., & Schneider, M. (2006). Phases of the adoption of innovation in organizations: Effects of environment, organization and top managers. British Journal of Management, 17(3), 215–236. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00498.x

Design Council. (2005). The 'Double Diamond' design process model. Retrieved from https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/framework-for-innovation/

Elmansy, R. (2021). The Double Diamond Design Thinking Process and How to Use it. Designorate. https://www.designorate.com/the-double-diamond-design-thinking-process-and-how-to-use-it/

Galdas, P. (2017). Revisiting Bias in Qualitative Research: Reflections on Its Relationship With Funding and Impact. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748992 (Original work published 2017)

Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. Nurse Education Today, 24(2), 105–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001

Hrebiniak, L. G. (2005). Making strategy work: Leading effective execution and change. Wharton School Publishing.

Isniah, S., Purba, H. H., & Debora, F. (2020). Plan do check action (PDCA) method: literature review and research issues. Jurnal Sistem dan Manajemen Industri, 4(1), 72-81.

Klein, G. (2013). Seeing what others don't: The remarkable ways we gain insights. PublicAffairs.

Kotter, J. P. (2008). A sense of urgency. Retrieved from https://www.cu.edu/sites/default/files/ExecUrgency.pdf

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8

Long, F. (2009). Real or imaginary: The effectiveness of using personas in product design. Irish Ergonomics Review, Proceedings of the IES Conference 2009, Dublin.

Longbine, D. F. (2008). Red teaming: Past and present. School of Advanced Military Studies, Army Command and General Staff College.

MacLennan, A. (2010). Strategy Execution: Translating Strategy into Action in Complex Organizations (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203847336

McMeekin, N., Wu, O., Germeni, E., et al. (2020). How methodological frameworks are being developed: Evidence from a scoping review. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 20, 173. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-020-01061-4

Mitcheltree, C. M. (2023). Towards a sense of urgency for innovation realization: A case study on complacency asymmetries in interorganizational relations. Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00267-2

Ndambiri, S. (2015). Barriers of effective strategy execution: Organization's challenge.

Nielsen, J. (1994). Usability engineering. Morgan Kaufmann.

Pawar, R., & Mahajan, K. (2017). Benefits and issues in managing projects by PRINCE2 methodology. International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering, 7(3), 190–195. https://doi.org/10.23956/ijarcsse/V7I3/0134

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012). Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Rogers, E. M. (2003). Diffusion of innovations (5th ed.). Free Press.

Royal Schiphol Group. (2023). Annual Report 2022. Retrieved from https://www.schiphol.nl/en/download/b2b/1678892591/6KuDXV8tLObOnmmEyuvtoB.pdf

Royal Schiphol Group. (2024) [A]. 2023 Annual Report. Retrieved from https://downloads.ctfassets.net/biom0eqyyi6b/4dK3ANlskFq31RXtEu9oyP/1a9b38969bfacf5a5bd75bd0c1f7d839/Schiphol_Group_Annual_Report_2024.pdf

Royal Schiphol Group. (2025). Annual report 2024. Retrieved from: https://downloads.ctfassets.net/biom0eqyyi6b/4dK3ANlskFq31RXtEu9oyP/1a9b38969bfacf5a5bd75bd0c1f7d839/Schiphol_Group_Annual_Report_2024.pdf

Royal Schiphol Group. (2024) [B]. Toerekeningssysteem 2025-2027 luchtvaartactiviteiten Royal Schiphol Group op luchthaven Schiphol. Retrieved from https://www.acm.nl/system/files/documents/toerekeningssysteem-royal-schiphol-group-2025-2027.pdf

Sanders, E. B. N., & Stappers, P. J. (2012). Convivial toolbox: Generative research for the front end of design. BIS.

Sauro, J., & Lewis, J. R. (2016). Quantifying the user experience: Practical statistics for user research (2nd ed.). Morgan Kaufmann.

Toet, A. S. (2024). The future is multimodal. The magazine of Airports Council International. https://airport-world.com/the-future-is-multimodal/

Van Boeijen, A., Daalhuizen, J., Van der Schoor, R., Zijlstra, J., Van Boeijen, A., & Van der Schoor, R. (2014). Delft Design Guide. Macmillan Publishers