



**BEYOND THE PLAN:
STRATEGIC AGILITY & SCENARIO
THINKING IN HOSPITALITY**

BF

BILL FOURNET
LEAD FOR TOMORROW



THE MAP **VS.** THE TERRAIN



WHY WE NEED A NEW MAP...

Traditional strategic planning assumes a stable, linear environment — forecasting based on last year plus/minus variables

Today:

- The “cone of uncertainty” widens faster than planning cycles
- Relying on historical data alone creates blind spots
- Agility = competitive advantage

3 THOUGHT STREAMS

Lines of thinking to help frame decisions and actions for leaders

THOUGHT STREAM 1

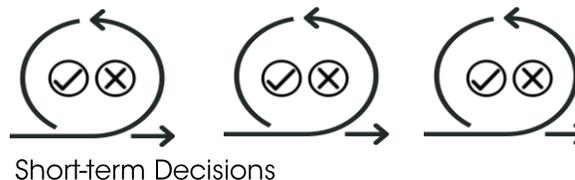
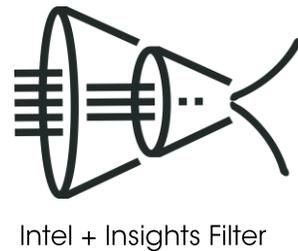
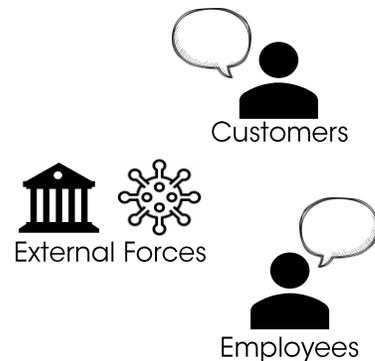
Are you validating your decisions with solid data points?

THOUGHT STREAM 2

How are you managing your short-term decisions, with an opportunity to reassess & adjust over time?

THOUGHT STREAM 3

What changes will likely result in long-term impacts on your organization and how you operate?



1

DEVELOPING FORESIGHT

PREPARING FOR UNCERTAIN
TERRAIN



FORESIGHT

The structured process of exploring, anticipating, and preparing for multiple potential futures.

FORESIGHT ≠ PREDICTION

LEADERS TODAY FACE A TRULY VUCA ENVIRONMENT



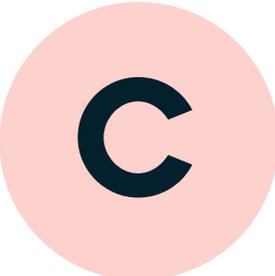
V

Volatility – Rapid swings in demand, workforce availability, pricing pressures, and technology acceleration



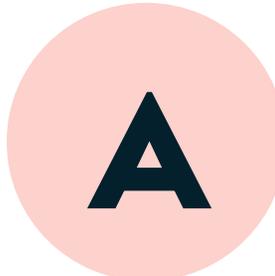
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Uncertainty – Unclear travel patterns, unpredictable regulation, shifting guest preferences, and emerging technologies like AI



C

Complexity – Interconnected global supply chains, multilayered digital ecosystems, climate pressures, and cross-border regulations



A

Ambiguity – Signals are hard to interpret; new trends emerge without clear precedent (e.g., AI copilots, carbon-neutral travel expectations).

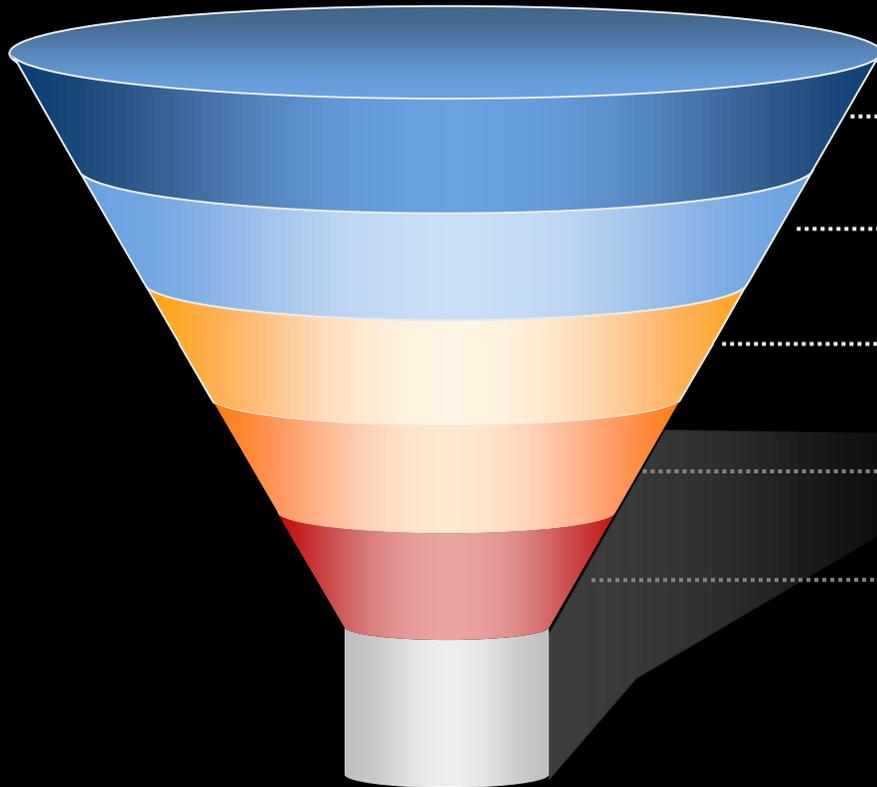


SYSTEMS THINKING AND INTERCONNECTIVITY

Focuses on how different elements within a system interact and influence one another

- Changes in one area affect the whole system
- Enables a holistic view of complex problems
- Prevents “siloes” decision-making through collaboration & integration

THE FORESIGHT FUNNEL



Weak signals: Earliest hints and anomalies

Signals: Emerging patterns worth monitoring

Trends: Confirmed patterns with sustained force

Drivers: The long-term forces shaping the system

Critical Uncertainties: High impact unknowns & scenarios



FOUR ELEMENTS OF FORESIGHT

SIGNALS

Small hints of emerging change (e.g., automated check-in kiosks, AI concierge).

TRENDS

Established patterns we can track (e.g., sustainability-minded travelers).

DRIVERS

Forces that shape the system (technology, economics, demographics).

UNCERTAINTIES

Variables whose direction is unknown but high impact (e.g., AI regulation, travel restrictions, talent shortages).



2

SPOT EARLY INDICATORS

BEFORE THEY DISRUPT YOU

TERRAIN SCAN

Gather and analyze information about external trends, events, and disruptors that may impact your organization.

Weak signals: Signs of emerging phenomena or the first symptoms of significant changes in the future. Weak signals can be difficult to identify because they seem unbelievable, irrelevant, or ridiculous.

Examples

- First travelers using AI copilots for trip scripting
- Early adoption of “pay-with-your-palm” biometrics
- First climate refugees influencing regional housing and travel patterns



TERRAIN SCAN

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Signals: Short-term indicators of a change in direction. Signals can be small, local innovations or disruptions that have the potential to grow in scale and geographic distribution. For example, a new initiative launch, sudden demographic change, or behavior shift could be a signal.

Examples

- Autonomous check-in kiosks being piloted in multiple hotel brands
- AI concierge being tested across several regions
- Increasing guest inquiries about carbon footprint of stays



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Trends: Long-term patterns or movements in a specific direction. Trends can be visible changes, such as rising demand for a product or service.

Examples

- Long-term increase in sustainability preference among travelers
- Consistent workforce shortages in service industries
- Growth in experiential and purpose-driven travel



WHAT ARE THE **BEHAVIORS** OF A
CONDITION YELLOW MINDSET?



SOMEONE WITH A CONDITION YELLOW MINDSET...

1. Listens for the phrase “I think” or “it should.” These are assumptions, and they could be dangerous.
2. Routinely asks “what if” for critical activities. This enhances preparedness for high-stakes milestones.
3. Has regular check-ins with stakeholders. Even without an immediate problem, they have the “intel” to spot potential issues early.
4. Keeps an updated “watch list.” They track unresolved items and potential challenges and share them with the team at all or most status meetings.
5. Encourages team members to voice concerns. This builds “condition yellow” skills in the team.
6. Keeps an eye on similar or past projects. This can help the team grow from lessons learned and avoid potential pitfalls.

DRIVERS AND CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES

DRIVERS: WHAT SHAPES THE SYSTEM

- Long-term, slow-moving forces
- Stable enough to build strategy around
- Not easily influenced by any single organization
- Create the context in which trends develop

Examples:

- Demographics, Technology acceleration, Economic forces, Environmental forces

CRITICAL UNCERTAINTIES: WHAT COULD CHANGE THE GAME?

- “High-impact + high-unknown” factors
- Can rapidly accelerate or disrupt Drivers
- Often related to regulation, technological adoption, or geopolitical shifts

Examples:

Speed of GenAI adoption, Travel-flow stability, Government regulation, Availability of skilled labor



SCENARIO PLANNING

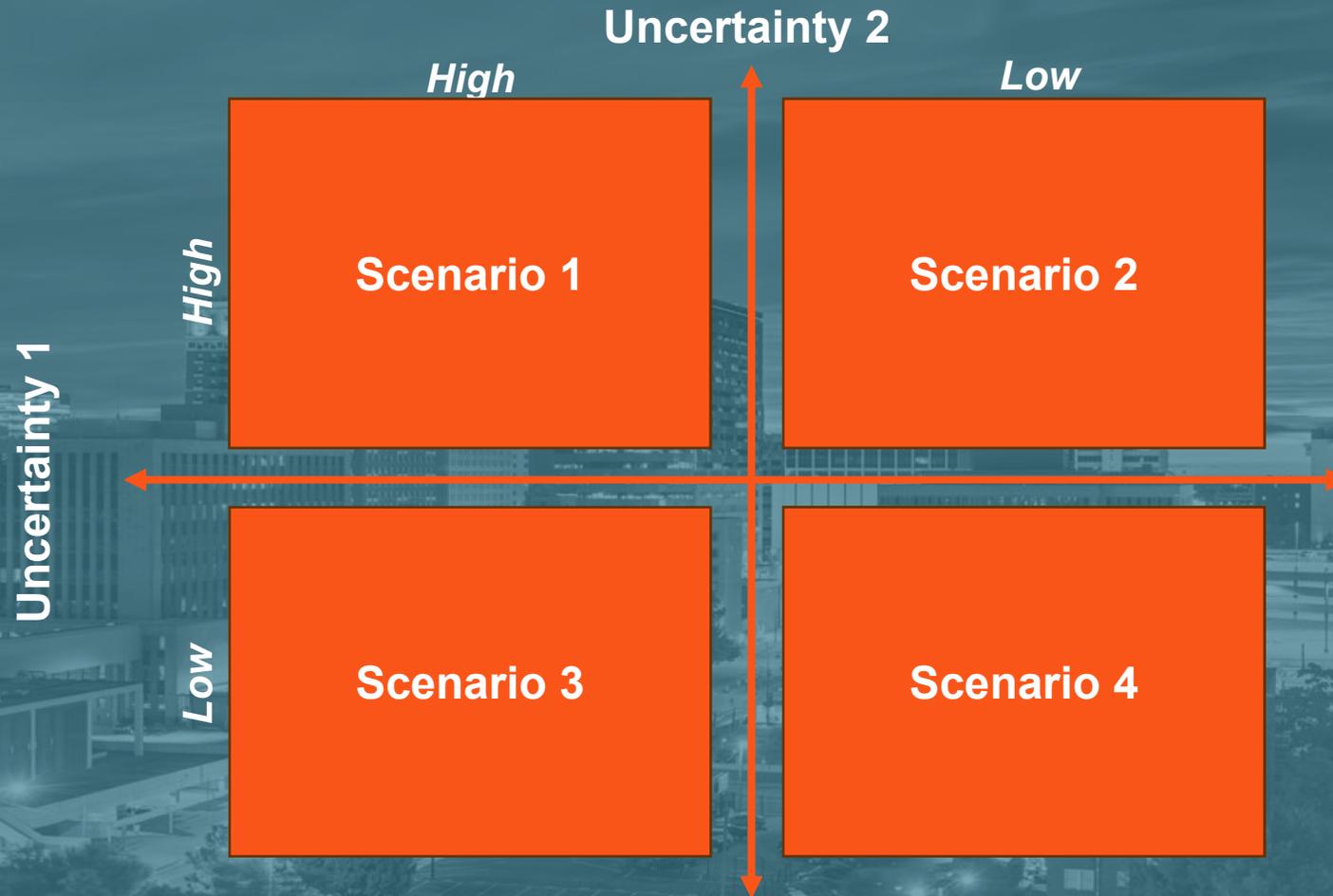
Is not about predicting the future but preparing for a range of possibilities

ADAPTABILITY IN UNCERTAINTY: Helps navigate complex, changing environments.

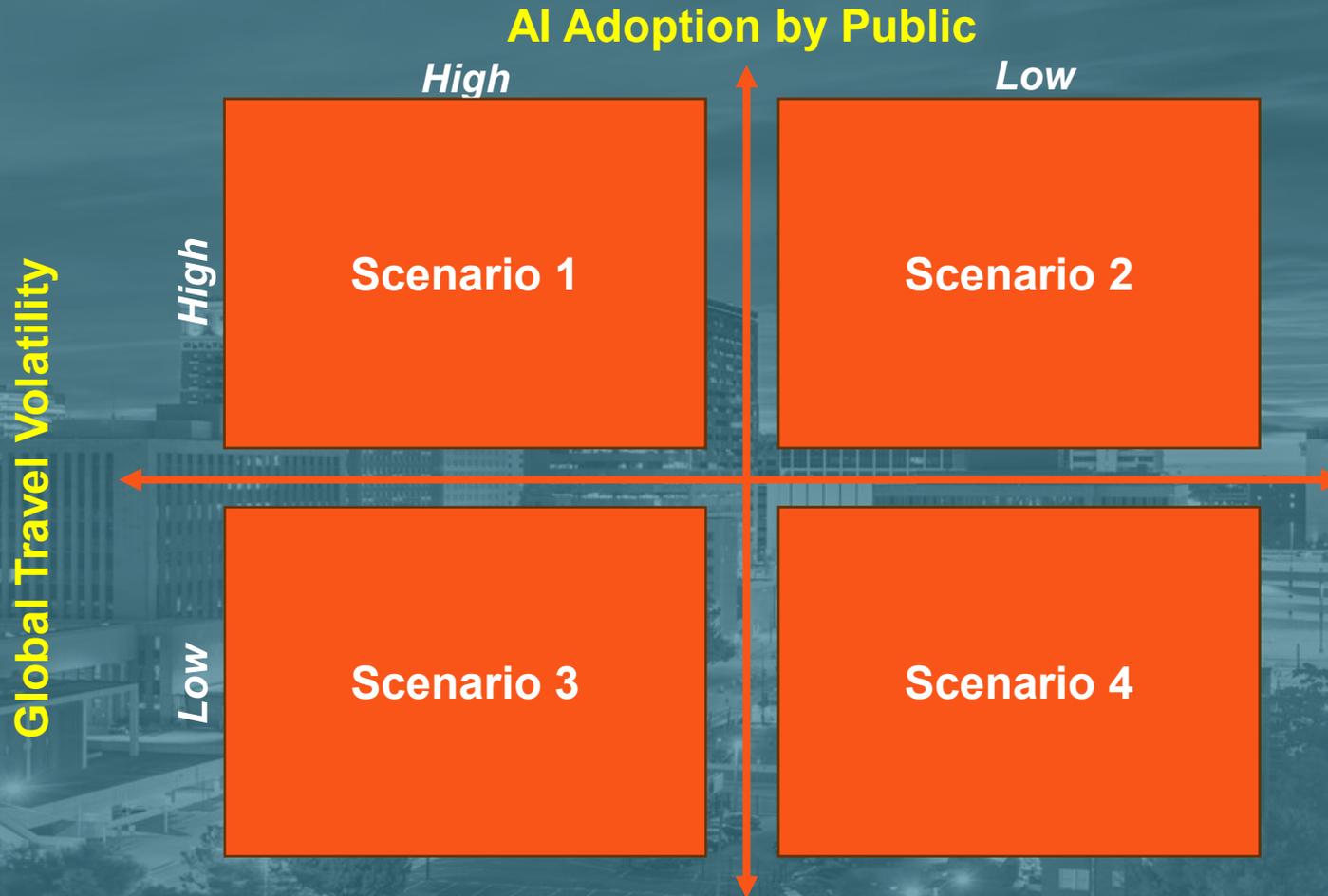
INFORMED DECISION-MAKING: Shapes proactive, evidence-based decisions.

RESILIENCE: Reduces risks from being caught off guard by unexpected events.

APPLICATION: SCENARIO PATHING



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AI Adoption by Public

High

Low

Scenario 1 (High AI Adoption/High Global Travel Volatility)

Scenario: *Fragmented Journeys*

AI adoption soars, but global travel faces disruptions—climate events, geopolitical tensions, shifting regulations, insurance spikes. Travel becomes inconsistent, costly, or occasionally restricted.

Implications for Hospitality

- AI helps optimize uncertain travel paths (dynamic rebooking, smart rerouting)
- Hotels must plan for erratic occupancy swings
- Rise of “local escapes” and micro-travel markets
- Associations advocate more heavily on travel regulations and crisis coordination
- Flexible staffing and dynamic pricing become survival skills

Signals You’re Entering This Future

- High frequency of travel advisories and climate-related disruptions
- Growth in domestic travel vs. long-haul
- Guests rely on AI tools for disruption forecasting
- Insurance costs or risk scores fluctuate wildly

Global Travel Volatility

High

Low

APPLICATION: SCENARIO PATHING

AI Adoption by Public

High

Low

Scenario 4 (High AI Adoption/Low Global Travel Volatility)

Scenario: *Seamless Planet*

AI becomes fully mainstream—trusted, ubiquitous, and embedded in daily life. Global travel remains stable and accessible. Digital passports, AI-driven travel planning, and robotics streamline the guest journey.

Implications for Hospitality

- Hyper-personalized guest experiences driven by real-time AI preference engines
- High demand for “frictionless stays”: auto-guided check-in, voice-enabled rooms, AI concierge
- Upskilling need for staff who can work alongside AI
- Associations shift to training on AI ethics, applications, and member education

Signals You’re Entering This Future

- Majority of consumers use AI copilots for daily decision-making
- Automated border control becomes common globally
- High adoption of hotel robotics with minimal pushback
- Regulatory alignment on AI standards

Global Travel Volatility

High

Low

THE POWER OF SCENARIO PATHING

- What surprised you about your future world?
- Which of your current strategies break under certain futures?
- What future required the largest mindset shift?
- What capabilities appeared repeatedly across all scenarios?

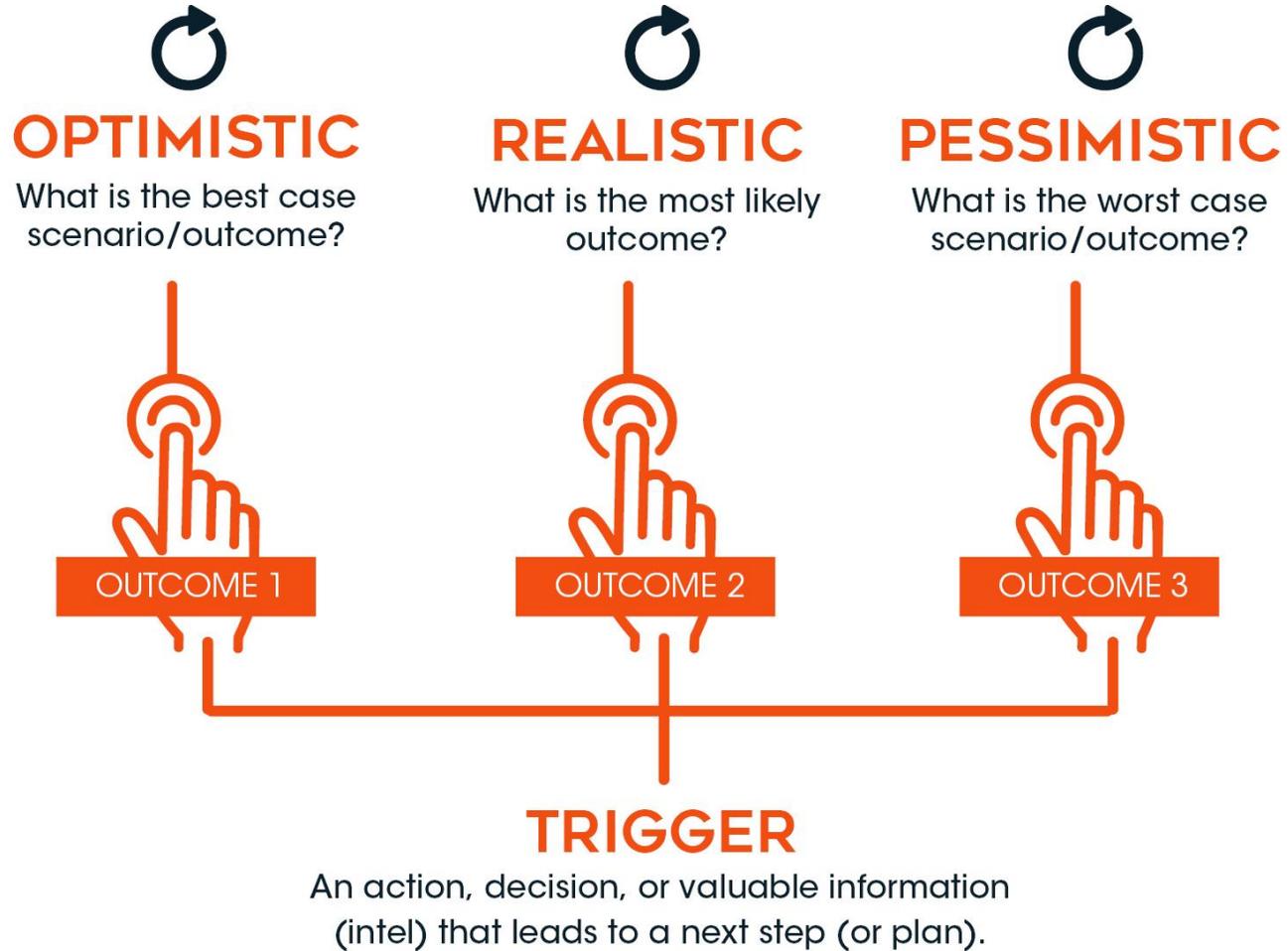


TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTIONS

TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

The Three Outcomes

PLANNING FOR UNCERTAINTY TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING





SEQUELLING

Sequelling is a scenario planning technique that maps potential pathways of action as future conditions evolve.

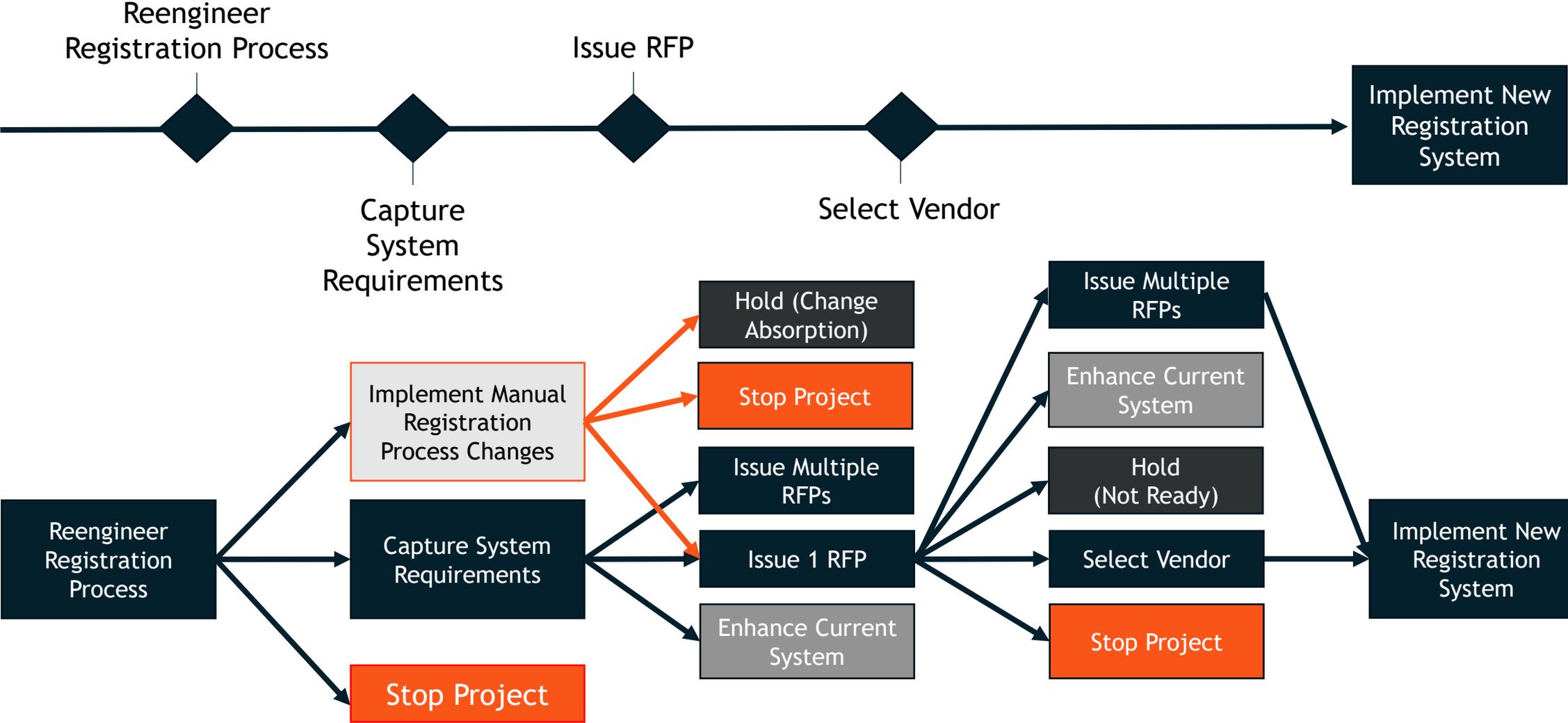
Think of it like a “choose-your-own-adventure” roadmap, where each decision leads to a new set of possibilities.



STEPS FOR CREATING YOUR SEQUELS

- Step 1: Identify the Key Decision Points:** What are the critical moments where decisions will need to be made?
- Step 2: Define Potential Triggers:** What signals or events will prompt action or escalation?
- Step 3: Map Potential Pathways:** For each decision, outline the next steps and possible outcomes.
- Step 4: Plan for Each Pathway:** Identify actions, resources, and stakeholders for every possible outcome.
- Step 5: Monitor and Adjust:** Continuously track signals and update pathways as new information emerges.

CHANGE YOUR THINKING - BREAK LARGER EFFORTS INTO MISSIONS



TAKEAWAYS FOR YOUR TEAM



Agility is built, not declared.



Scenario thinking builds “future resilience muscles.”



Leaders don’t need perfect foresight — they need preparedness.

3 WAYS TO APPLY FORESIGHT IMMEDIATELY:



Start monthly or quarterly “signal scans.”

Short, 20-minute conversations: “What’s changing that we should pay attention to?”



Integrate scenarios into annual planning.

Ask: “How does our strategy perform in at least two different futures?”



Use scenarios in board or leadership retreats.

Facilitates richer, more strategic conversations.

A decorative background on the right side of the slide featuring a topographic map with orange contour lines of varying thicknesses, representing different elevations. The map is partially visible, extending from the top right towards the bottom right.

Strategic agility comes from
practicing the future
before it arrives.

LET'S CONNECT!



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ACCESS TO PRESENTATION TAKEAWAYS

