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# AI-Assisted Decision Pathway Checklist

A practical checklist for identifying where AI, automation, analytics, or technical recommendations influence decision pathways.

Public resource · Practical checklist · Version 1.0

This checklist helps organisations identify where a decision pathway may become exposed when AI, automation, analytics, ranking systems, alerts, summaries, or technical recommendations influence how a decision is formed.

It is not a legal assessment, technical audit, certification, conformity review, or substitute for internal governance. Its function is to help teams ask better first questions before a route is questioned under pressure.

# 1. How to Use This Checklist

Use this resource on one concrete decision pathway, not on the organisation as a whole. The pathway should be narrow enough to describe and material enough to matter: an approval, restriction, prioritisation, triage, complaint decision, escalation decision, internal review, or operational action where a technical system influences human judgement.

Work from evidence where possible. If an answer is unknown, mark it as unknown rather than inventing certainty. The difference between "not applicable", "not documented", and "unknown" is often where exposure begins.

The core question is simple:

## **Can the organisation reconstruct how technical influence became human judgement and operational commitment?**

| Step                               | Action   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Select one pathway              | Choose one repeated or material route. Do not start with the entire AI estate.                                       |
| 2. Identify the operational effect | Name what changes for the person, team, customer, case, asset, risk, or organisation when the decision takes effect. |
| 3. Map technical influence         | Locate where AI, automation, analytics, rankings, alerts, summaries, or vendor systems shape the route.              |
| 4. Test human authority            | Ask whether humans had usable authority before effect, not only formal responsibility after effect.                  |
| 5. Review reconstruction           | Check whether evidence, reasoning, escalation, and commitment can be reconstructed later.                            |

## Decision Pathway Definition Sheet

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Decision pathway name</b>              |  |
| <b>Operational effect of the decision</b> |  |
| <b>Business owner / accountable area</b>  |  |
| <b>Systems or tools involved</b>          |  |
| <b>People or groups affected</b>          |  |
| <b>Evidence currently available</b>       |  |

## 2. Technical Influence Points

The first exposure question is not whether the system formally decides. It is where technical outputs shape the path toward the decision. A system can influence attention, priority, evidence, confidence, timing, escalation, or default options without holding formal authority.

| Check                    | Question   | Notes / evidence |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Does a system select, prioritise, rank, score, filter, summarise, route, flag, or recommend cases?             |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the system output visible before the human forms a view?  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the output affect which evidence is seen first, highlighted, omitted, compressed, or treated as relevant? |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the technical recommendation become the default option unless someone intervenes?                         |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are low-confidence, incomplete, or conflicting outputs clearly marked before human review?                     |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can reviewers see what the system used, ignored, inferred, or could not evaluate?                              |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it recorded when a human relies on, modifies, rejects, or escalates a system output?                        |                  |

### Exposure indicators

- The organisation can explain that a tool was used, but not how its output affected the route.
- Human reviewers usually accept the recommendation, but the reason for acceptance is not recorded.
- The system narrows the field of attention before the responsible human sees the case.
- There is technical traceability, but it is not connected to decision traceability.

Practical note: technical influence does not automatically mean improper influence. The issue is whether the influence is visible, attributable, and reconstructible.

### 3. Authority, Discretion, and Human Control

Many organisations preserve formal human sign-off. That is necessary, but it does not always prove that human authority remained real. The practical test is whether a responsible person could understand, question, delay, override, escalate, or refuse the route before the operational effect occurred.

| Check                    | Question  | Notes / evidence |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a named human or role with authority before the decision takes effect?                                     |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can that person see enough evidence to form an independent view?  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can the person pause, reject, modify, override, request more evidence, or escalate the case?                        |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is deviation from the system recommendation operationally viable, accepted, and documented?                         |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are time pressure, workload, interface design, or approval routines pushing reviewers toward mechanical validation? |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is human reasoning recorded at the time of decision, not reconstructed later?                                       |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the difference between reviewer, approver, system owner, vendor, and accountable organisation clear?             |                  |

#### Authority stress signals

- The human is accountable, but does not have practical access to the evidence behind the recommendation.
- Override exists in policy, but is rare, discouraged, slow, or not clearly documented.
- Reviewers approve quickly because the system output is treated as already authoritative.
- Escalation exists, but staff cannot explain when it should be used.

**If formal sign-off is strong but practical discretion is weak, the pathway may look governed while remaining exposed.**

## 4. Evidence and Reconstruction

A pathway can be documented and still be difficult to reconstruct. Documentation records pieces. Reconstruction shows the relationship between pieces: system output, human attention, evidence considered, alternatives, reasoning, escalation, and final commitment.

| Check                    | Question  | Notes / evidence |
|--------------------------|---|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can the organisation show what evidence existed at the time of the decision?                                |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can it show what evidence the human actually saw before acting?   |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can it distinguish system output, human reasoning, and final organisational commitment?                     |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are alternatives, rejected options, or reasons for non-escalation recorded where material?                  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are audit logs, workflow records, review notes, and final decisions connected to the same route?            |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can the organisation separate evidenced facts from assumptions and unknowns?                                |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Would the record survive challenge from internal audit, legal, board, regulator, client, or affected party? |                  |

### Reconstruction gap markers

- The final decision is recorded, but the path from recommendation to judgement is not.
- There are logs, but no one can explain which logs matter for accountability.
- The organisation can prove activity, but not responsible judgement.
- The rationale was written after the fact rather than contemporaneously.

The most important record is often not the system output itself. It is the evidence that shows how that output entered, shaped, or failed to shape human judgement.

## 5. Escalation, Commitment, and Initial Readout

Escalation and commitment are decisive because they show when a pathway could still be corrected and when the organisation became bound by the outcome. Exposure increases when escalation exists on paper but cannot be reconstructed in practice.

| Check                    | Question   | Notes / evidence |
|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Are escalation triggers defined for uncertain, high-impact, disputed, low-confidence, or exceptional cases?              |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it clear who receives escalation and what authority they have?  |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can the organisation show when escalation occurred, did not occur, or was bypassed?                                      |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a clear point where recommendation, review, approval, execution, and organisational commitment become distinct? |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Can a decision be paused before it affects a person, customer, operation, risk position, or legal posture?               |                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Is post-decision challenge, appeal, correction, or review connected back to the original pathway?                        |                  |

### Initial readout

| Pattern observed  | Possible meaning   |
|---|--|
| Mostly clear answers with supporting evidence                                   | The pathway may be sufficiently reconstructible, subject to normal governance review.              |
| Several unknowns around influence, authority, or evidence                       | The pathway may require targeted documentation, escalation, or ownership stabilisation.            |
| Formal sign-off exists, but discretion, evidence, or escalation cannot be shown | The pathway may carry material decision exposure and should be reviewed before a challenge arises. |
| No one can reconstruct how technical output became organisational action        | The pathway is likely not ready for scrutiny without structured diagnostic work.                   |

## 6. When to Request a Diagnostic

Request a diagnostic conversation when the checklist leaves unresolved questions about who held authority, what evidence existed, whether human discretion was real, how escalation worked, or whether the pathway can be reconstructed under pressure.

Do not submit confidential case files, personal data, or sensitive evidence through a public form. Start with a bounded description of the pathway, the type of technical influence, and why the route matters now.

**IDΔAC™ can examine a concrete AI-assisted decision pathway through a 14-day Exposure Diagnostic focused on authority, evidence, discretion, escalation, and reconstruction.**