

Why Every Office Project Needs a Decision Matrix

IDPM Executive Brief No. 02

Office fit-out projects involve dozens of decisions every week.

Some are technical.

Some are commercial.

Others influence programme, budget or workplace quality.

Yet many organisations never formally define who is authorised to make which decisions.

As a result, decisions are delayed, responsibilities become unclear and project teams spend valuable time waiting instead of progressing.

A Decision Matrix eliminates this uncertainty.

It establishes clear ownership, approval levels and escalation paths before the project starts, allowing teams to act quickly while maintaining appropriate governance.

Successful projects are not necessarily those with fewer decisions.

They are the projects where every decision has a clearly identified owner.

Why decisions delay projects

Construction work usually stops for only a few reasons.

One of the most common is waiting for decisions.

Examples include:

- Selecting finishes
- Approving furniture
- Confirming layouts
- Accepting variations
- Releasing procurement
- Approving additional costs

When nobody knows who owns a decision, progress stops.

The cost of waiting often exceeds the cost of the decision itself.

What a decision matrix defines

A Decision Matrix answers five simple questions.

- What decision has to be made?
- Who prepares the recommendation?
- Who approves it?
- Who must be consulted?
- Who only needs to be informed?

By documenting responsibilities before the project starts, uncertainty disappears.

Typical decision categories

An effective Decision Matrix usually includes:

- Design approvals
- Budget approvals
- Programme changes
- Procurement decisions
- Technical changes
- Change requests
- Risk acceptance
- Move-in readiness

Executive checklist

Before your project starts, ask yourself:

- ☐ Is every major decision assigned to a named owner?
- ☐ Are approval limits clearly defined?
- ☐ Is there an escalation path?
- ☐ Does everyone know who approves additional costs?
- ☐ Can decisions be made without waiting for committee meetings?
- ☐ Are governance and agility properly balanced?

Conclusion

Projects do not become faster because people work harder.

They become faster because decisions happen at the right time, by the right people.

A simple Decision Matrix is one of the most effective governance tools available—and one of the easiest to implement.